

# FRINGE WARE REVIEW

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**guest editors**

Erika Whiteway, outrider@well.com  
 Tiffany Lee Brown, magdalen@well.com

**art direction, adverts & mix down**

Monte McCarter, monte@well.com

**publisher & catalyst**

Jon Lebkowsky, jonl@io.com

**digital design & production**

Paco Xander Nathan, pacoid@io.com

**contributing editors**

Scotto, MOORES7518@cobra.uni.edu  
 Don Webb, 0004200716@mcimail.com

**fashion spokesmodel**

Tauna Lebkowsky, c/o FringeWare, POB49921 Austin TX 78765

**cover model**

Rebecca Cannon, c/o RiseRecords, 2116 Guadalupe #210 Austin TX 78705

**foreman, moo construction crew**

Wiley Wiggins, weevil@io.com

**contributors**

Reva Basch, reva@well.com  
 Pat Cadigan, cadigan@well.com  
 Rebecca Cannon, lilith@bga.com  
 Bo Drillard, peter-snuggler@hetero.com  
 Carmen Hermosillo, humdog@well.com  
 Eric Martin & Brad Martin, martin@cactus.org  
 Eric S. Theise, verve@well.com

**transpersonal novelty agent**

/bin/rover, fringeware-request@io.com

**special-issue patron saint**

SPECTRA, (she's from another planet)

**illo credits**


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 Tiffany Lee Brown [21]  
 Rebecca Cannon [14, 35]  
 Sham Dingus [13]  
 Brian Flynn [12]  
 Erika Whiteway [38]  
 Wiley Wiggins [13]

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**FRINGEWARE INC.**  
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 a u s t i n , t x 7 8 7 6 5 u s a  
 fringeware@io.com  
 http://io.com/commercial/fringeware/home.html

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Women don't get online for a number of reasons. Lack of interest, lack of opportunity (don't own a personal computer and modem), view computers as work tools only, can't afford to pay for online services, don't have time. Women who are not online probably don't even know enough to be intimidated by it.

Mostly I cherish the mental telepathy of it all. I imagine this is the hook for a lot of women: men seem to use telecomm for information access.

I was not at all interested in technology or computers per se, resisted learning more about it all though my brother was pounding it at me, but I was captivated by online connectivity. In that way, my interest seems "female", it was focused on people communication not technology. It has lit a fire under me to learn about computers and rekindled my hope for the future.

I hate having to respond to people who assume that because I'm a woman I'm uncomfortable with technology/computers/online life/the net/your thing here

I think one of the reasonable fears people have is of abandoning altogether that reality we think of as non-virtual. Think of how much time people spend watching stuff on t.v. which they could be experiencing directly or creating themselves...and when we can rocccaally plug ourselves in, might we not be tempted to check out Virtual Paris rather than bothering to fly over an ocean to see the city itself? Why climb a tree when you could virtually climb one? Why attempt socializing and relationships when we could have a neurologically-correct Virtual Barbie to satisfy our desires? I think most people would use the ability to jack in as a supplement and complement to so-called real life, but I can understand why some folks are a little edgy about the whole idea.

HELP

Gender is the first construct, the first box to break out of. Think about it: isn't your gender (meaning the hard/software between your legs) the very first thing that labels you? The ultimate binarism. The first mask, the first suit of clothes. ... Imagine a 3rd gender (without getting bogged down in sexual behaviors). ... Can you imagine the freedom of it?

"But aside from rare women-only areas, there do not appear to be many places online where women can go to break [their] self-imposed silence. Of course, it's not this way on every newsgroup, but the fact that it happens on groups like *alt.feminism* is enough to give us cause for concern. Recently I've been witness to the unmasking of a group of (male) flammers who were organized, deliberate, and methodical in starting flame wars on unsuspecting groups. Are we compensating for something here? Do we have too much time on our hands? It will, of course, be a hard lesson for this group of males when they find that they can't keep women out of cyberspace, and that dominance isn't as important as discussion."

-from "go girl!", *The Inquisitor* vol.1 #2  
inquisitor@exchange.com

If women want to turn the communication around to a more balanced environment, it is our duty to be out there and contribute. Lurking because we are afraid to be "shouted down" is only lending power to abusive people. Being afraid to contribute for fear of being found wrong will not open the doors to our seeing a new viewpoint or confirming (optimistically) that we are correct, or have a new point of view to offer. Also, I have noticed that a lot of abusive people stop when the target of the abuse simply makes a statement, "That really hurt my feelings." ... Don't hide out...stake your claims on the new frontier.

E. M. Richards

We're not afraid of opinions, even those not fully supported by footnotes, endless "logical" argumentation, and academic druck. Who sez our style of communication should change so that we can appear more "assertive"? I say let the men and the pedants learn to speak from the gut and cut thru the shit; I've already spent too much of "my" time learning "their" language.

Some women are capable of holding their own in right/wrong arguments; some occasionally do. But most (including a fair number of men) won't.

Crash

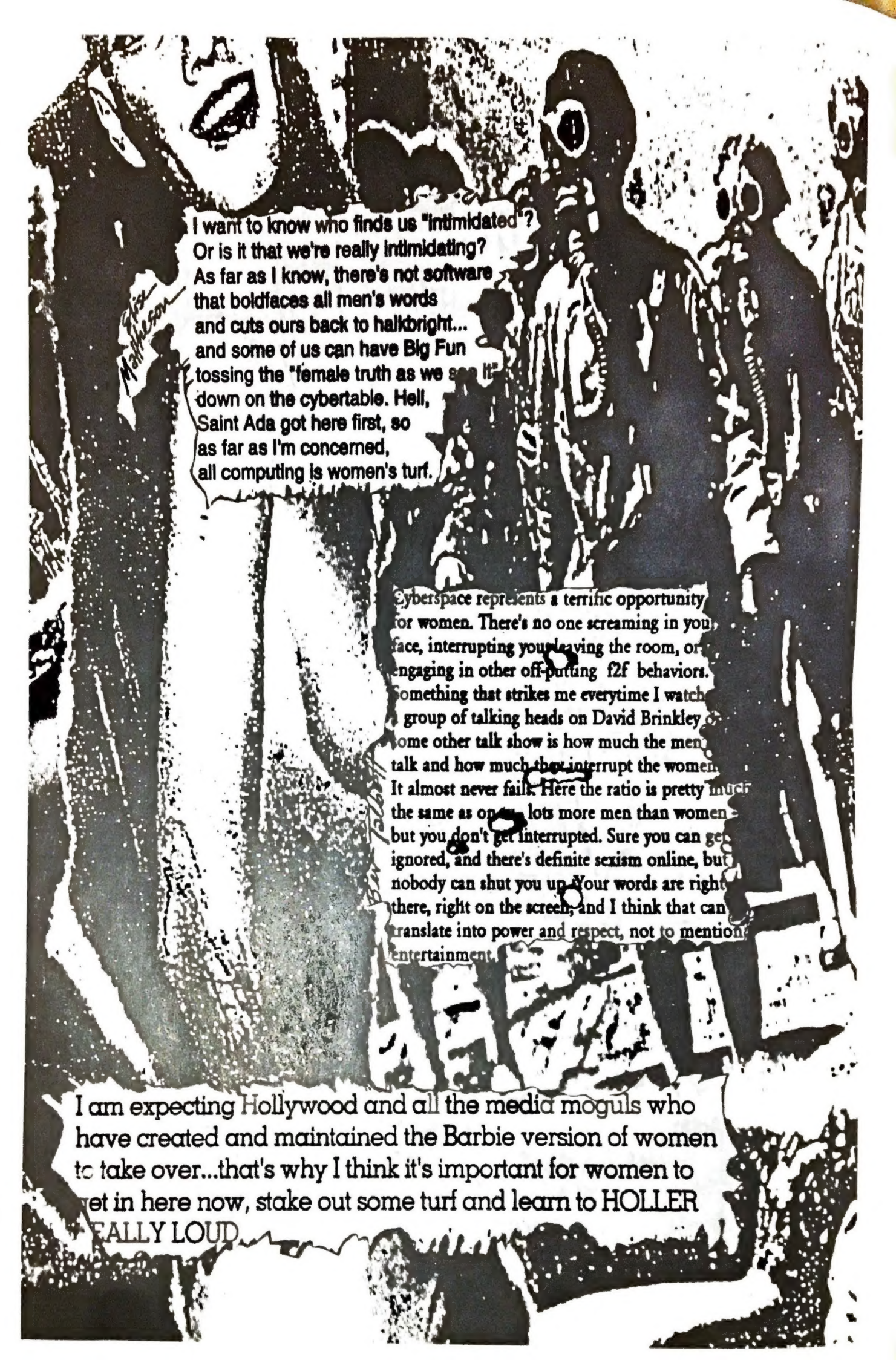
FOR THE

The discourse of cyberspace isn't something you can put a fence around, like cyberspace itself, even though many are trying to do just that. Pedants would like the world to be as orderly as a university lecture hall, where chosen people speak wisely and uninterrupted. That isn't discourse.

You don't have to be a linguist to see that yeah, women do tend to speak from an unabashedly subjective point of view. We say "I think" and "I feel" a lot, we speak with personal voices, we tell stories.

I sincerely believe that men and women in our culture have two things in different order of priority: Relationship and Outcome. Women, in general, seem to place more importance on building, nurturing and sustaining Relationships, trusting that Outcomes we may seek to pursue together become attainable within that frame. Men in general seem to place more importance on pursuing and achieving Outcomes, often at the expense of Relationships. I think that women in cyberspace often sense this disparity, and then men begin to encourage topic drift from "soft" relationship-building stuff toward "hard" outcome-focused issues, they withdraw. What women largely haven't yet learned, in my opinion, is that there is an appropriate Outcome of helping the topic stay on Relationships.

I think we've proved that what women say is often summarily ignored online. But it's also true that I'm often not sure if I'm fighting **SEXISM or INTELLECTUALISM**



I want to know who finds us "intimidated"?  
Or is it that we're really intimidating?  
As far as I know, there's not software  
that boldfaces all men's words  
and cuts ours back to halkbright...  
and some of us can have Big Fun  
tossing the "female truth as we see it"  
down on the cybertable. Hell,  
Saint Ada got here first, so  
as far as I'm concerned,  
all computing is women's turf.

Cyberspace represents a terrific opportunity  
for women. There's no one screaming in your  
face, interrupting you leaving the room, or  
engaging in other off-putting f2f behaviors.  
Something that strikes me everytime I watch  
a group of talking heads on David Brinkley or  
some other talk show is how much the men  
talk and how much they interrupt the women.  
It almost never fails. Here the ratio is pretty much  
the same as on TV, lots more men than women -  
but you don't get interrupted. Sure you can get  
ignored, and there's definite sexism online, but  
nobody can shut you up. Your words are right  
there, right on the screen, and I think that can  
translate into power and respect, not to mention  
entertainment.

I am expecting Hollywood and all the media moguls who  
have created and maintained the Barbie version of women  
to take over...that's why I think it's important for women to  
get in here now, stake out some turf and learn to HOLLER  
REALLY LOUD.

# *seduced & destroyed: the meat in cyberspace*

Tiffany Lee Brown, magdalen@well.com

Almost two years after my article on "Chicks In Cyberspace" was conceived for another publication, I still haven't written it. Is it because I embraced too thoroughly the online world, sought to understand its technology with excessive enthusiasm? While I freely accuse myself of this can't-see-the-forest behavior, it's not the cause. Nor is it the aggravating fact that exploring gender these days brings on an avalanche of conflicting theories, studies, opinions and personal anecdotes. I won't even blame it on my distaste for knee-jerk political correctness, naively dogmatic approaches to rediscovering goddesses, and the great phallic fortress purporting to defend us po' gals—academic multiculturalism.

No, that seminal magdalenian work I pictured so vividly may never come squalling into reality for the simple reason that I can't type anymore (thank gopodess for Erika, who's plugging the ASCII into the machine for me right now). While I'm feeling most indulgently self-pitiful about it, I try to find some *meaning* in the sudden and crippling attack of tendonitis and "nerve damage" that struck me down in what oughta be my prime (*sob, sob*). The irony's beautiful enough to almost seem satisfying . . .

## PERMEATING THE GLASS MEMBRANE

I know, gys, you've heard it all before—so I'll spare you the tedium of reading another detailed explanation of just how pervasive feminine socialization can be. Suffice to say that like most women, I needed to undertake some serious metaprogramming merely to approach a computer. After forcibly dragging myself beyond the limitations set on women by creeping osmosis—little girls who've not yet grown thick skins find that many a demeaning image and artificial boundary has seeped in via traditional meme-molecules—I deposited myself into the testosterone-saturated nest of online communication.

**OBNOXIO-RANT!** The preceding four pages were distilled from hours of conversing and image-gathering, and megabytes of online discussion—for which we heartily thank all the women who participated in our online forum and email flow. (All quotes come directly from these interactions; any unattributed ASCII was from my or Erika's contributions.)

You'll find the rest of *FWR#4* equally personal, anecdotal and opinionated—like most of the women we've found communicating vocally on the fringes.

I stepped into the incorporeal world with caution. Though intrigued and fascinated, I felt a bit dubious about some of its residents: here were people—groovy, interesting ones, mind you—who spent more waking hours at a computer terminal than they did at Real Life™, who wanted only to crawl inside the great uterine boxes that contain the umbilical cords of the information age. In public conversation (both online and off) I carefully extolled the potency of the visceral world along with the virtual, and found the issue to be of major importance to many women. We must maintain the life of our bodies, I was told, and nurture that amorphous connection to the earth and nature which we historically preserve (compared to men).

In the end, though, I dove right in. Fuck technophobia; forget that I spent 17 years in an educational system which gently pushes chycks away from math and science; ignore the potential addictiveness of jacking in: I didn't just want access, I wanted total immersion.

## BAPTISM BY FIRE

Disembodiment has its own allure. Transcending the meat has become a common goal in many religions, philosophies, paths of knowledge and discipline. The loftiness of living in the mind, surpassing the base needs of the flesh, attracts more than just ascetics, Christians and logicians...in this age of alienation and visceral paranoia, regular ol' white trash Americanoids like myself can drop happily into the sucking vacuum of mediated communication. Alices in a never-ending rabbit hole.

Not to say that the cliché of swimming in sweat and Jolt cola, social incompetence and bodily neglect necessarily apply to all infojunkies and screen-addled geekabees...no, I found that virtual relationships complemented and enriched Real Life™. The realtime meat life, however, required

While many seem to happily adopt—and adapt to—the impersonal/analytical voice favored by most academics and journalists, a lot of folks walk away from this oftentimes competitive form of writing and expression. Women seem to be natural proponents of intimate, no-bullshit prose that grounds itself in actual human lives rather than seeking its validation from awkward external standards handed down from dead Greek gys and their pretentious intellectual spawn.

so much time and attention that I was left very little time to learn even a minuscule fraction of what the eclectic, mysterious world of nets and modems had to offer—from its unbelievable fascinating sociology to fountains of factoids to even the most simple commands I would need to operate with marginal competence.

The solution, it seemed, was to work online. My neophyte mind snapped up network customer support so voraciously that I felt I must've been born to do it. What a happy ending, huh? A girl-meets-modem, girl-gets-modem, girl-gets-paid-to-learn-UNIX-and-telecomm dream plot!

## CHANGE FOR THE MACHINES

The flesh begs to differ. All the wide-eyed curiosity, and neoph(ye)-jilia in the world can't override the reality of carbon-based frailty. When your fuckin' arms stop functioning, the magical innocence of online frolicking suddenly dissolves; the great quest for knowledge and fast-n-furious communication might just have been idiotic obsessive-compulsion.

My initial female-programmed suspicion toward technology reawakens, and I am facing the future with uncertainty again. The computer still owes its existence to white male scientists with too much time and fundage on their hands...the Net's evolution still stems from dubious beginnings as a shiny accessory of the war machine. And while women are delving into this world, joining the ranks of microsers and sysadmins of .edu's, starting their own online services and creating library databases, there's a picture in my brain that I can't seem to shake: hundreds of us in sweatshop rows, bent over an invention which was hailed as a boon to women everywhere—the sewing machine. 1/6

There's definitely a need for all styles of communicating, but as women we often exhibit our historical tendency to be seen and not heard; like children, many of us creep off to dark corners, away from the authoritative intonations of pompous intimidating men, to share our unique stories and languages. Enough of THAT. Hope you enjoy—maybe even learn from—our voices and experiences. We're not likely to shut up any time soon.

# Women's Wire: i/v w/ co-founder Nancy Rhine

In the course of putting this issue together, most of women I've met and talked to are not Gen-Xers: They are fortysomethings. Some people would call them Old Hippie Chicks—not a very snappy name, and one I'd like to refrain from using, since I'm on the rising slope of that group. The media's made the world think that cyberspace was invented and inhabited by twenty- or thirtysomething year-old men: they leverage buy-outs at the Pacific Stock Exchange and spill cappuccino on their Armani ties; they sit home in their underwear drinking Jolt and hack into TRW after having ten orgasms from IRCs with hot virtual babes; or they are geeks in a computer lab at High Tech U., cleaning their glasses and developing pin-head-size CPUs that fit in your ear.

In reality, women were early users of the Internet. They were librarians. Data processors. Researchers. Political activists. Feminists. Entrepreneurs. Single moms searching for ways to make a living while staying home with their kids.

Nancy Rhine, co-founder with Ellen Pack of *Women's WIRE* (Women's Worldwide Information and Research Exchange), is one such woman.

"I'm probably a good example of the average woman," she said during one of several phone and on-line conversations, "my dad wasn't a physicist; I didn't play with computers when I was five. I was a middle-class Midwest girl who grew up to be a hippie."

After joining up with the Caravan (a group of 100 colorful busses that toured the country advocating peaceful anti-Vietnam demonstrations) when they visited her college in Ann Arbor, she ended up on The Farm with a whole mess o' folks who are household names in the virtual world. For those of you who don't know, The Farm was and still is one of the successful communes born in the 60s, and many relationships formed there and then continue in the hi-speed-modem 90s. She met a funny fellow there named Cliff Figallo, former WELL director, now advisor to Women's WIRE and Nancy's soulmate.

"I lived on The Farm for a few years, got married and had three kids. That's where I first got into computers."

As she said this I was vaguely remembering some photograph of The Farm—or so the caption read—where a long-haired hippie-person in irrigation boots was standing beside a split-rail fence next to a Godzilla-sized pig. "It must have been our neighbor," says Nancy, "we didn't have pigs on The Farm." No matter, I still imagine a giant old computer in the barn beside sacks of Purina Pig Chow.

"We had a non-profit organization, *Plenty*, and were also into CB radios and satellite dishes; we put out *The Big Dummie's Book of CB Radio* and *The Big Dummie's Book of Satellite Dishes*, published books on soy technology, ran a midwifery school and an ambulance service for the Akwesasne Indian reservation on the St. Lawrence River—the white ambulance companies wouldn't go there."

I now visualize that big computer in the Farmhouse kitchen where The Farmers busily baked bread and changed the world at the same big plank table. It seems only natural that many of them would be online now.

"Then I helped Ida Mae Gaskin start the database for *MANA* (Midwife Association of North America) and her book publishing company. I left

**"I feel like we've brought the women and the wagons into a wild west town"**

in 1983 for San Francisco and a divorce, and was faced with raising three kids alone. I was living in Bolinas, and there's no jobs in Bolinas, so I started a landscaping business with a friend, but that didn't work out. Another friend who was a software reviewer for *Whole Earth Software Catalog* gave me an old Compaq portable with some word processing and database programs and I started a word processing and bookkeeping service. The most notable thing I did was edit a screenplay for Peter Coyote. All the time I was balancing being a mother, owning a business and getting my degree in psychology."

The most overlooked computer trend in the media is the boon this technology has been for many working moms. One reason there may be a lack of females participating in on-line services is

that their computers and their time are tied up with work. "Women are really busy," Nancy said, when I asked her why many of my women-friends are so resistant to getting on-line, "I know when I come home at night I have household to run and kids to deal with, and a lot of women I know are in the same situation." One of my friends, a writer and perfect candidate for the on-line experience, finally told me after my hundredth "get online" plea, that it would just be "...one more thing for me do..." Maybe a lot of those lurkers in cyberspace, who form a considerable contingent of any online service, are women who simply haven't got the time to be fully involved.

"Friends had been telling me for years to get on the WELL, get on the WELL, but I never did. I got a job offer to organize the customer support policy at the WELL—they wanted someone personable and computer literate. So I was suddenly online forty hours a week. I began to love it, and see the power of this communications tool. I did everything from documentation to hiring carpenters and working with programmers. I was the manager, initiator, and instigator. I was also doing competitive research, in which I analyzed and

evaluated what other online services were doing with pricing and everything, and I realized then that there weren't very many women. I thought it would be really fun to get more interaction with women online, it would be really neat for a service to go totally of its way from its inception to encourage women to get into communications."

The standard gender ratio is reportedly 15-20% female to 80-85% male, although it varies slightly among different services. Women's WIRE says their gender ratio is the opposite: 80% female to 20% male. "I see Women's Wire as a way for women to get involved in a less threatening environment, and as a springboard to greater Internet access. We call it 'moving mountains from the front porch.'"

Sounds very Farm-like to me.



"Ellen Pack was a chief operating officer in Silicon Valley, also an entrepreneurial type. She was also coming to the same conclusion—that telecom was going to be a big thing in the future.

"Ellen was working on another project and hired me to do market research. After three months I brought her a report saying that I thought this particular company was 'premature', and I brought another report listing my analysis of why a women's network would be timely. She said 'I've come to the same conclusion.' We began to hold focus groups and I became a network buff. We worked for one-and-a-half years before opening in October 92."

Most of us cybernauts have stories we tell our non-cyberized pals about friendships or other ships that came about online. We talk about meeting people we would never otherwise meet—like how a performance artist in San Francisco might find herself engaged in a flame over pomo literature with a programmer from New York, or develop a deep relationship with a waste management specialist on a job in Singapore. While the uninitiated view this techno-revolution as a threat to our human-ness and whine like pomo Luddites about being usurped by machines, the reality is that online communication has enlarged the field in which our human-to-human interactions take place. Our reality is made larger along with our ability to virtually travel the world, and at the same time this new huge world has physically shrunken to the size of a computer screen that resides on a tabletop in our own private biospheres. Computers and modems are helping us develop our humanity, increase our communication with others, and re-define the word "community".

"I got into this stuff because I liked to learn, and liked math. I saw that computers helped me work at home, keep on learning, expand my exposure, find work, ideas, friends, and support. I like community networking—this is another kind of life, another place to travel.

"I feel like we've brought the women and the wagons into a wild west town. I have mixed feelings about Big Business getting involved and where it's going to go. I like the good feelings and the sharing of space...I feel like it's the range wars between the ranchers and the farmers—this is another territory, and now the fences are going up. I'm not upset but I'm observing. I will just keep trying to affect it the way I can, in my way. We need to be educated ourselves, participate, and have our voices be heard." 1/6



# WIRE

Society Unmasked

Erika Whiteway,

[outrider@well.com](mailto:outrider@well.com)

Though it was conceived and initiated to serve women and their interests, Women's WIRE is not for women only: membership is roughly 20% male, 80% female. Some of you may ask, "Why a service for women?" Founders Nancy Rhine and Ellen Pack determined a need for such a service partly by tuning into the 90s zeitgeist (more women in politics, the election of the Clinton administration and Al Gore's interest in telecommunications) and by holding numerous focus groups. Their research also revealed significant growth in women-owned businesses who needed and wanted the ease and freedom of online communication and the ready access to information and resources. It was simply an idea whose time had come. "We wanted to help women come into their own," says Nancy.

WWire has a visually pleasing and easy-to-use graphical interface, courtesy of FirstClass. The first time I tried WWire was via telnet and that was kind of a mess. The DOS version of WWire is nothing remarkable or horrible, but for first-time users the Windows or Mac versions are a major help in overcoming technology-induced catatonia. I would recommend WWire to anyone, male or female, who's not on good speaking terms with their computers. It's all point-n-click and self-explanatory, with lots of pull-down menus and

help. It's much smoother than America Online, which is the service many people say has the most agreeable interface. Unfortunately, transcending the concept of command-lines is one of the few redeeming qualities of AOL; as other services vie for dollars by adding graphical interfaces, WWire has the potential for far greater content and user interaction than any of the huge impersonal services due to its focus and concern for the user. In the near future, WWire will have full Internet access, but for the time being members can avail themselves of the email gateway, newsgroups, USENET—the standard features of a young-bud service.

WWire frequently has on-line interviews with various female notables (male guests are scheduled to appear in the future). Recently these included Ina Mae Gaskin (MANA), Susie Bright, (*Sexual Reality: A Virtual Sex World Reader*), Audrie Kruse (TURN), Jennifer Loudon (*Women's Comfort Book*), Autumn Stephens (*Untamed Tongues, Wild Women*), Thalia Zepatos (*Journey of One's Own*). Members have the opportunity to question interviewees, although the experience can seem baffling at first, as anyone who's done chats before can tell you. But many people online live in areas that

aren't on anyone's lecture circuit, so the opportunity to "hear" a favorite author is a nice offering.

WWire is doing a tremendous job helping non-profit organizations "get wired for the 90s": last November they held free training seminars for 50 non-prof agencies in San Francisco and Los Angeles, financed by a grant from TET (Telecommunications Education Trust, a fund established by the Public Utilities Commission), and aided by CompuMentor, a San Francisco-based non-profit that provides technical assistance to other non-profs. Training, coupled with the Organization Network conference on WWire, provides non-profit agencies with an instant information exchange, a place where organizations can come together to solve problems and lend support. Chief among the participants is the Boston Women's Health Collective, The National Education Center for Women in Business, Women's Cancer Resource Center, and several chapters of NOW.

I perceive WWire as being primarily an information resource rather than a communications tool.

The conferences were not as accessible or organized as those I am used to, but this is mostly a matter of taste. WWire does not yet offer full Internet access, but they have Internet email, along with a gopher site, USENET and news wires. WWire also combs the Net for information of interest to women and presents it as a kind of news digest. I found this a pleasant alternative to some services' offerings of mainstream newspapers and magazines.

WWire is still in its infancy, so the information network is under construction. What currently exists is woman-oriented (and there aren't many places one can go for that), with an emphasis on business, working moms, parenting, politics and healthcare. Most all-women/women-only things make me wonky. I tend to steer clear of what I imagine to be electronic versions of the kind of women's crap I fervently avoid in real life, but WWire is not a whining neo-feminist Nazi-on-yer-hard-drive. WWire has a sophisticated yet

comfortable feel. The Female Personification of WWire would be a self-possessed woman of indeterminant age: she is self-employed (imports fabrics, ethnic/folk art, has an online research biz or a graphic design company), or she is a highly-paid executive guiding a big company into the next century; she is comfortable with anyone because she is comfortable with herself, and can talk knowledgeably and with experience about Baudrillard, Spaghetti-O's, Fords versus Chevys, Macs versus PCs, and Roseanne Barr's latest butt tattoo; she would be someone I would meet for coffee. *JS*

An account on WWire costs \$15.00 a month, which includes 2 free hours; additional time is \$2.50 an hour.

Women's WIRE  
435 Grand Ave  
S. San Francisco, CA 94080  
1 415 615 8989 voice  
1 415 615 8989 fax  
Internet address: [wwire.com](http://wwire.com)

## Epilogue:

### Joint Statement By WIRED and Women's Wire

On October 5, 1993, WIRED, a startup magazine and electronic publishing company, notified WIRE, a startup service which offers an easy-to-use online product especially (but not exclusively) for and about women, that they felt that the use of the name WIRE was confusing and infringed on WIRED's trademark. After a series of negotiations, part of which dwelt with the issue of whether WIRED's trademark covered Internet domain names (such as [wire.net](http://wire.net)), the management of WIRE has decided to rename their company, service and net site. As of January 6, 1994, this service will be called Women's Wire, and located on the net at [wwire.net](http://wwire.net). WIRED has agreed to help defray some of the printing costs of changing Women's Wire's name on their stationary, manuals, brochures, etc.

This dispute has been disruptive and personally taxing on both parties, and both are relieved to have this settled. We wish to put this energy- and resource-draining episode behind us. At the same time we acknowledge that the contentious issue of trademarks in net domain names will not be left behind. We support further public discussion of this and related intellectual property issues on the electronic frontier.

Si tratta però di un femminismo diverso da quello più in voga oggi in America, e che rivendica con orgoglio la diversità fra uomo e donna (e che lo stesso critico biasima come passivo, gentile, nostalgico e naturista), e che rimane ancorato ad uno stadio anteriore, quello della ricerca dell'uguaglianza a tutti i costi, quello visto per intenderci in *The Female Man* di Russ. Molly di *Neuromancer* è il tipico esempio: donna forte, spietata, violenta, indipendente. Più che il machilismo, quello che transpare è sempre l'individualismo spinto degli abitanti della narrativa cyberpunk, siano uomini o donne: un individualismo di marca a volte ribellisuca e anarcoide, ma altre egocentrica e superomistica. E' proprio la duplicità di tale individualismo anarchico che complica la lettura apparentemente semplice ma in realtà semplicistica di una fantascienza cyberpunk reazionaria. Più grave, e fondata, è l'accusa di xenophobia, che richiama alla mente le paure americane del pericolo rosso, o meglio giallo, visto che i "cattivi" qui sono i dirigenti d'azienda giapponesi. L'ostilità in *Neuromancer* è verso le *zaibatsu* è il corrispettivo narrativo dell'ostilità americana verso l'avanzata tecnologica ed economica giapponese. Siamo di fronte, ancora una volta, all'individualismo: una della cause della diffidenza verso il popolo del Giappone è motivata dall'accusa di "essere come le formiche", non possedere sufficiente individualità. Il cliché è significativo, e ritorna persino sulle labbra di un pensatore cyberpunk insospettabile come Timothy Leary.

— Mafalda Stasi, [mafalda@ccwf.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:mafalda@ccwf.cc.utexas.edu)  
God Save The Cyberpunk, 1993

A lot of bickering and discussion goes on about online services: which one's "The Best", which are "k00l", which are really governmental-surveillance outposts. That sort of thing. After having tried many and deciding to reside on the WELL while maintaining occasional contact with a more mainstream service, it's occurred to me that people are not comparing like-to-like. When I caught myself saying (repeatedly, heatedly, often and everywhere) that America Online sucks—as opposed to the WELL—I realized: that's like saying "Time Magazine isn't as good as *The Collected Works of Shakespeare*." Which doesn't mean I like AOL anymore than I already don't. It serves a different purpose, one which I happen to have no use for. The AOL "community" is another matter.

IMVORO (In My Vociferous Obnoxious Ranting Opinion), services like AOL, GENie, CompuServe, Prodigy and that ilk, are not Virtual Communities like the WELL and ECHO (New York's version of the WELL); they are like big cities. They are anonymous and large, and like cities, offer the kind of urban amenities one expects to find in such areas: universities and/or community colleges, big fat Sunday newspapers with nationally known Pulitzer-prize winning journalists, brokerage firms, libraries, and shopping-spots galore from boutiques to malls—plus a higher-cost-of-living; all those bitchin' things don't come cheap, but some are more affordable than others.

It's like living in Santa Cruz versus Los Angeles. Both places have universities and JCs (in LA, quite a few) and libraries, etc., both have beaches and sun and beach-types on bicycles, but it costs a lot less to live in Santa Cruz. On the other hand, lots of people prefer LA to the beach-town ambience of SC. Some people like frantic, crowded environments. They would like AOL, or CServe, services which have pretty hefty fees—a low base rate plus additional charges for certain features and connect time.

The WELL and ECHO are like Santa Cruz. Their main purpose is communication between people. They provide full Internet access, email, gophers, newsgroups—the whole online enchilada minus a bunch of pinatas hanging from the ceiling and a roving Mariachi band to come to your table and sing Happy Birthday in Spanish while you eat a little piece of Key Lime pie with a candle in it served on a *hecho-a-mano* dessert

plate (my reference to fancy graphical-user-interfaces). While I have made friends on mainstream services, I never had the sense that I was part of a virtual cybercommune the way I do on the WELL. Everytime I mention the WELL, I'm afraid that more and more people will sign on and the virtual real-estate developers will move in and start putting up apartment buildings where the feed store used to be. But that's what happens when the world finds out about your great little town. In fact, rumor has it that the pinatas, mariachi bands, and pretty dishes are coming to the WELL any day now. Will the price of a meal go up? Probably. Will the feel of the place change? Assuredly. Adding a GUI does have the effect of dumbing-down the service, making it easier for mouse-potatoes to join the party. These are not the same kind of people who will bother to learn PicoSpan—much less UNIX—commands for the sake of communicating with others. Do I dare say they're of lower intelligence? On one level, maybe. On another, they might simply lack a certain degree of patience and desire that weeds out people with thinking disorders.

BBSs, on the other hand, are like...all I can think of are clubs I remember from High School—the Chess Club, Future Farmers of America, Photography Club; people come together on BBSs around a mutual interest. It's a smaller small town than the WELL, which some people call a glorified BBS. Many BBSs have limited or even full Internet access and email service. They are like neighborhood corner grocery stores where you go to pick up a carton of milk, not shop for weekly supplies.

The main complaint I have—echoed by other women—is the heavy male come-ons a female gets on major services. On AOL I was consistently bombarded with virtual hard-core, often very crudely presented. The mean age of the mostly male population seemed to be fifteen, but I even had two professional men—one a dentist and one a Washington DC journalist who sent me his resume—reduce themselves to slobbering panting adolescents, behavior they assuredly would get slapped for in real life. But it was fun (for awhile) delivering virtual putdowns to these jack-offs. There was an utter absence of higher intelligence on AOL. But maybe that's why they offer all those online college courses.

Other criticisms of AOL include their rigid corporate attitude and censorship policy akin to

Prodigy's. It is only slightly less suit-n-tie than CompuServe. Even though you can actually get through on their 800-number customer support line, you can tell that the person you're talking to has a big fat manual in front of them and has gone through extensive training on how they, as AOL servants, represent the Corporate Fathers. They're not even as nice to talk to as the phone company reps. AOL also uploads—on your dollar—huge graphics files for *Time* magazine and the *San Jose Mercury News* every time you log on. It not only eats up your money but your disk space, and personally, if I'm going to read a magazine I'd rather read a magazine, not my monitor.

AOL's GUI is smooth and easy to use, based on Geoworks Ensemble software (which ships with an AOL trial membership), a program I've used and liked since it came out. But that is the only good thing I have to say about it. Maybe it would be a good service if you were an invalid living in Hogwallow Tennessee, completely cutoff from the world: AOL would let such a person take college classes (even GED classes, I think), read a newspaper, and download a photo of the babe he's (face it, you p.c.-patrollers, the user is probably a gy) been hounding if she's uploaded it to the Rogue's Gallery (that name, that pine, like so many cutesy titles on AOL: gag me with a gigabyte drive, man).

CompuServe—or CompuSpend—is the big corporate Megatropolis of services. And it acts like it. I've never EVER gotten through to their customer support line in any of the four or five years I've tried the service. Their tiered pricing system is twisted and frustrating as an LA freeway cloverleaf at rush hour. The services you get for your "nominal fee" are basically email (limited) and some hokey stuff I can't even remember. Everything else is like ordering from a Chinese menu: two from column A costs \$\$, but if you take one from column B and C, you get a flaming pu-pu tray for \$2.95! Even posting in Forums costs extra.

If you have burning desire to participate in forums for *PC Magazine*, *Computer Chronicles* TV show, etc. (there are more than 600), or get online help for yet another fabulous piece of software whose manual requires that you own a Captain TechSpeak Decoder apparatus, then this is your place. Or perhaps you would like the full text of over 60 newspapers downloaded to your computer.

A first-time CServe user would probably feel lost and overwhelmed, even with the CompuServe Information Manager for DOS and Windows. Imagine being a foreigner dropped off in the middle of downtown Manhattan, with no money, can't speak the language, it's snowing and you are wearing your native costume of grass-shoots and bird-feathers with a fetching strand of shell-beads. Just "g me outta here"!

My impression of the average user is Michael Milken, managing his vast investment portfolio, emailing Japan, and reading stock quotes, while he idles behind bars between tennis matches with Ivan Boesky. Although, to be fair, I have a good friend, a fabric-artist, who loves her get-togethers with other fabric-artists on CServe, and says her bills run about forty bucks a month. Maybe it's me.

I never really gave GEnie a good shot. The sign-up procedure was so complicated that I was too annoyed to actually check it out. I was issued a log-in name and password—big strings of letters and numbers that are hard to remember and easy to lose, and you don't get to change it to something easier like you do on Prodigy. Unlike AOL, CompuServe and Prodigy, GEnie does not have software they have to send you. Anytime a service has to send me software, I get suspicious and immediately assume they've inserted little bugs and retrieval devices to surveil me, my system, and my files. Prodigy was accused of this a while back, and acquitted, but I remain paranoid despite the statement to the contrary that appears in their latest

**Imagine being a foreigner dropped off in the middle of downtown Manhattan, with no money, can't speak the language, it's snowing and you are wearing your native costume of grass-shoots and bird-feathers with a fetching strand of shell-beads**

membership agreement. Even though any service could conceivably do this—once the pipe is connected and open, the ASCII flows both ways—loading a service's software onto my hard-disk feels like I'm being invaded. So GEnie at least doesn't have that, and I give them bonus points for it. Their rates are low, too, compared to AOL and CServe, and they provide full Internet access. In fact, GEnie, like Delphi, falls into a sort of nether-world, a space that's not exactly a virtual city or small town or corner grocery store. More like a General Store in a mid-sized agricultural area

(Manteca, California comes to mind, except that Manteca these days is in the process of conversion from farm-town to Affordable Bay Area Tract Homes Only Seventy Miles From Downtown San Francisco). GEnie has a little of this and a little of that, and is a good basic service, as is Delphi. I have absolutely no idea who the average user might be—there isn't enough character or presence in either service to give me an immediate impression.

Prodigy: the glowing, on-line manifestation of Sears and IBM. I am almost embarrassed to admit that I lost my virtual virginity to Prodigy when it first came out, but it's true, and I still recommend it for first-timers and people with kids. It has, hands down, the easiest-to-use interface of any service, and because of the on-line advertising that appears and changes with each new screen, is very affordable—\$14.95 a month, plus some tiered pricing that I haven't bothered to familiarize myself with yet (sorry that this is the only service I can give accurate pricing on—I just got a free month and the others just start at, say, \$9.95 and skyrocket from there for anything interesting). Prodigy now has Internet email so they're not as stodgy and provincial as they were at first (and as they tried to remain).

The main MAIN thing about Prodigy is that they seem to recognize their female users. There's a lot of traditional-mom info and resource-exchange stuff going on there, albeit somewhat skewed to recipes, crafts and pomo-June Cleaver activities. From that standpoint alone, and in keeping with the Cyberchix theme, Prodigy deserves some credit.

The major downside is their Moral Majority/Family Values Coalition attitude: while email is not filtered for "acceptability" anymore, or so they say, posts still are. There's Correctness Cops lurking in the wires, and that is why I would never take up residence there.

The other service I want to mention is Women's WIRE, which is explained in detail in an accompanying article.

If you're looking for a service, you need to decide what it is you want to find on the other end of your phone line. Most people who've been

online for awhile find they need or want different services for different things. I call the WELL my home—it's my virtual saddle-rack in cyberspace, the place at the end of the round-up where there's coffee on the cook-fire and other Netriders to chew the fat with. For me, most of my needs are met there. I believe that cyberspace is about people and communication; all that other stuff—shopping, schooling, newspapers, airline reservations—I can get or do elsewhere. But I have the option to sign up on another service—and I do from time to time—to access those things. Whatever I've said about all these services, they're just my opinions and I'm sure they differ from those of other people. It was kicks cruising the services and formulating these opinions and impressions, and if you really want to know what's going on for yourself, I encourage y'all to do the same. 1/8

America Online: +1 800 827 6364  
GEnie: +1 301 251 6415  
CompuServe: +1 614 457 0802  
Prodigy: +1 800 PRODIGY (776-3449)

The WELL  
+1 415 332 6106 (8,N,I) login 'guest' or 'newuser'  
voice: +1 415 332 4335 / info@well.com

#### Other services of interest:

Institute for Global Communications/IGC Networks  
(PeaceNet, EcoNet, ConflictNet, LaborNet, HomeoNet)  
+1 415 322 0284 (N-8-1), 'new'  
\$10/month + \$3/hr after first hour  
voice: +1 415 442 0220 / support@igc.apc.org

Echo Communications  
+1 212 989 8411 (v.32, v.32 bis) 'newuser'  
voice: +1 212 255 3839 / horn@echonyc.com

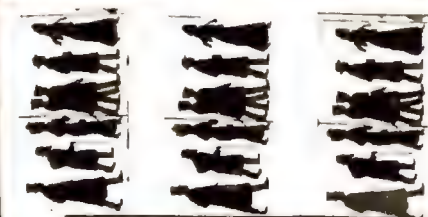
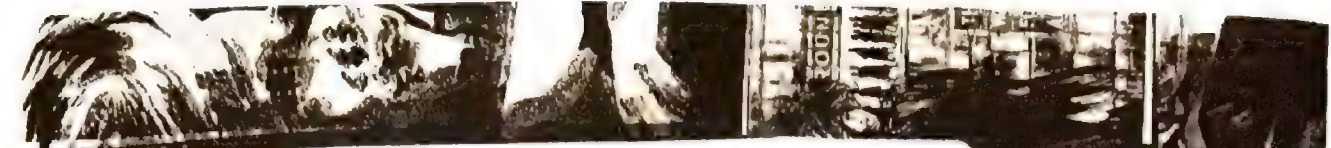
DELPHI  
+1 800 365 4636 JOINDELPHI password:INTERNETSIG'  
voice: +1 800 544 4005 / walkthowe@delphi.com

MindVox  
+1 212 989 4141 'mindvox' 'guest'  
voice: +1 212 989 2418 / info@phantom.com

note: In any given issue of PC Magazine and a host of others, there's usually a free offer from one of these companies, and offers also come with some new modems.







SUMMER OUTING.  
BY PRIVATE BUS  
WE'LL  
COME AND RIDE WITH



Great  
with you



UNDERGROUND  
for the  
Business & Professional



MORE WORK  
CONDUCTED

FOR PARTICULARS



AND





# secrets of the snoopers

Reva Bosch, reva@well.com

Time does something strange when you start talking about computers: for one thing, it accelerates wildly. Whole empires rise and fall in weeks, eons go by in the course of a year. The changes come so fast and are so radical that the early 80s, when microcomputers first hit the street, seem like the Cretaceous era now. I got my first machine, an IBM XT, about 10 years ago. It had a 10-meg hard drive, which I couldn't imagine I'd ever fill, and a blindingly-fast 1200 baud modem. Apple was selling its Lisa about then; the Mac was yet to be born.

I've been online, though, techno-geologically-speaking, since way before the earth cooled. We're talking about the mid-70s, prior to the dawn of the—*ta DAH!*—Personal Computer Age. I first logged in on a Texas Instruments Silent 700 terminal, a hunk of plastic that resembled a portable typewriter. At the back was an acoustic coupler, a pair of flexible rubber cups that looked like Mickey Mouse ears. These were designed to fit around both ends of your phone receiver, once you'd dialed the data line and heard the connecting modem-screach. 300 baud seemed pretty zippy at the time, as the print-head drifted back and forth putting line after dot-matrix line on the TI's thermal paper. Yup, paper—no monitor, no glowing phosphors. The first interface to cyberspace was print.

It's an interesting perceptual shift, revisiting my own early history in light of the hype surrounding "cyber"—anything today. There were a lot of us pioneers out there, 20 or so years ago. We were librarians and research specialists, mostly, proto-net-surfers teaching ourselves how to ride the first gentle swells of the information age. Most of us were women. We learned how to use symbolic command languages and Boolean logic to extract journal citations from the dozens of commercial datafiles that were just coming online. We'd connect with a mainframe in Palo Alto or Santa Monica or Latham, NY, type in a highly-structured search query, and wait for the system to check its internal indexes and come back with a "hit count". Then we could print out the results, or modify our question and try again. It was a conversation of sorts, between searcher and CPU. In fact, online bibliographic retrieval, as it was then called, represented a major revolution in information processing because it was real-time and interactive.

There was definitely an aura of magic about the process, an exchange of power going on. De-

spite the rudimentary technology, I felt, every time I went online, that I was engaged in a muscular ballet, if things were going well, or a mud-wrestling bout, if they weren't. It was human ingenuity against the brute strength of machine intelligence. The contest was fueled by adrenaline: most of these databases cost megabucks per hour in connect fees, and the object was to get in and out as quickly and efficiently as I could, clutching the info-nuggets my clients and I were looking for.

Even back then, there was a sense of "there" in cyberspace. With a curling piece of coated paper to mark the progress of an online session, it felt more linear, more temporal than cyberspace does today. Staring into a screen emphasizes the depth, the spatial component. Still, I sensed a presence, a will, a game to be played out, somewhere between my keyboard and the 'puter on the other end.

It wasn't all business, though. By the early 80s, Information on Demand, the company I worked for, had signed up with both CompuServe and The Source, a now-defunct competitor. We advertised our research services in a low-key way, used

to Key West for a rendezvous with this guy she'd never met. They spent a delicious week together, which Steve later chronicled in his book *Computing Across America*. Chapter 19, "The Ultimate Blind Date," tells all. Well, *most*.

Big deal, you say, happens all the time. Now it does, sure, but this was 1984, and moving a relationship from e-space to face-to-face, for other than professional conferences and collaboration, was almost unheard of. Barbara was an unwitting pioneer. In retrospect, what she did was as risky as it was romantic, but the mindset of the time included one fairly major assumption: If someone is functional enough to own a computer and figure out how to get themselves online, they're probably not a psychopath.

Flashforward a few years. I've gone out on my own as a researcher-for-hire: *have modem, will travel*, virtually speaking. Depending on my mood and who's asking, I may call myself a database rider, an info-surfer, a cybrarian. There's a lot more information available digitally than there was in the early days—the complete text of news-

To me, it feels like a real place, a true virtual society complete with friends, antagonists, innocent bystanders, pillars of the community, town drunks, whores and loonies

email to negotiate projects with potential clients, and gradually noticed some client relationships transmuting into social ones. We began to realize that there was a compelling appeal to this new medium, and that it had less to do with gathering information than with making connections between people, connections that just wouldn't have happened otherwise.

My friend and colleague Barbara connected bigtime. She began following the reports that Steve Roberts was posting on CompuServe about his cross-country trip on a recumbent bike equipped with a computer and modem. They started emailing, and things heated up in a hurry. I'd hear stifled gasps and giggles from the "terminal room" where we did our database searching. Before I knew it, Barbara was out the door and on her way

paper stories, transcripts of *Oprah*, press releases, company financial data. I'll tackle just about anything my clients want to know and will pay me for finding out. As long as it's legal and seems doable, I'll look for it: Male-female differences in color perception, the upscale coffee bean industry, current research on chronic fatigue syndrome, gallium arsenide semiconductor fabrication, the first recorded use of the term "guerilla marketing." I can never tell, when the phone rings, what odd request I'll be confronted with, or what bizarre resources I'll be called upon to use. There is, after all, an entire database with over 22,000 references devoted to *coffee*.

These days, I'm infosurfing at 9600 bps (the fastest rate supported by most of the database services I use), and on a 486 clone or a PowerBook

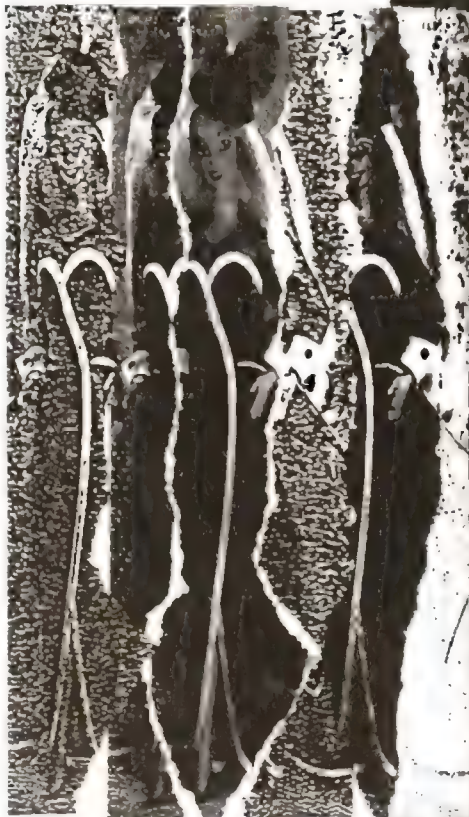
180c instead of that 300 baud dumb terminal. But it still feels like a contest of wits to me—woman against mainframe, human intuition versus raw bits and bytes. Sometimes, when skill and luck combine, everything flows together: my fingers flying on the keyboard, ASCII scrolling up the screen, a few more keystrokes, a tweak here and there, and voila: answers! This is powerful jujitsu, the ability to find in minutes what might take hours, even days, to track down in the library, assuming it's there at all.

There's a lot more to my modeming, though, than helping clients figure out whether there's room on the market for yet another line of natural fruit-flavored mineral waters. My little bit of experience with email and online conferencing had whetted my appetite; as soon as I left Information on Demand, I signed up for my own CompuServe account, which I've maintained to this day. I use it mainly for email, and to check into a couple of work-related forums, including a members-only section for the Association of Independent Information Professionals. For a couple of years, life online remained a comfortable, stable mix of professional data-surfing, access to the convenience of email, and occasional visits to the virtual water-cooler on CompuServe where my colleagues—many of them home-office work-alones, too—hung out for a bit of banter and shop talk.

But then I fell into The WELL. That's where I really earned my cyber-wings. I'd been hearing about this place for quite a while before I finally signed up. It had the reputation of being an electronic salon full of smart, funny, well-informed people, and it sounded like my kind of place. Not only that, it had an email link to the Internet, and that meant real interconnection, much more so than on CompuServe, with cyberspace at large. Though I've since picked up a Netcom account for general email and for cruising to remote Internet sites, The WELL is really the substrate, the underpinning, of my life on the Net. To me, it feels like a real place, a true virtual society complete with friends, antagonists, innocent bystanders, pillars of the community, town drunks, whores and loonies. There's a shared history, and there are subtexts galore. It's a rich and steamy jungle full of exotic life-forms, a sociological experiment run wild, a village with hundreds of twisty little buildings, all different, and thousands upon thousands of rooms.

In mid-91, after three years or so of participating in dozens of WELL conferences, I was invited to take over the hostship of *Women On The WELL*.

a.k.a. WOW. WOW is a private conference, it's limited to women only. We do verify gender insofar as we can; we don't admit women who share an account with a man, even if "he swears he never peeks", and we maintain a policy of confidentiality: What's said in WOW stays in WOW. For that reason, I can't go into the specifics of what it's like in there, but I can sketch out some of the basics: About 400 women have signed up to use WOW, although only a few dozen of them post regularly. The vast majority lurk and read, or just pop in occasionally. They range in age, from what I can tell, from their late teens to their early 80s, with the majority in their 20s, 30s and 40s. They are lesbian, straight, bisexual, asexual. WOW members log in from all over North America, plus



Europe and Australia; they live in the New York sprawl, in Silicon Valley suburbs, and deep in the woods where a data line is one of their few links to civilization. Some of us are computer geeks; some are people like me who needed the tools and fell in love with what the technology could deliver. But for the majority of WOW participants, computers are a footmole, a way of accomplishing communication among people. Many of us are artists, health professionals, librarians, political activists, journalists, office workers, full-time mothers. It's undoubtedly a whiter and wealthier demographic profile than that of womankind in general; that's an unfortunate function of who has access, at this point, to the machines and the expertise it takes to get online.

WOW is one of the most active conferences, a mix of public and private, on The WELL, with several dozen conversations active at any given time. I brought a cohort, Bev Talbot, on board in the spring of '93, when the traffic was getting too heavy for me to handle on my own. If you check in once or twice a day, you're likely to find a string of new responses in 15 to 25 individual topics. Since WOW opened in 1986—a year after the birth of The WELL itself—almost a thousand individual topics have been introduced (anyone can start a topic), on subjects ranging from the situation of women in Bosnia, to feminism in all its flavors, to relationships, birth control, lesbian and bi issues, and yep, talk about hair and cosmetics and cooking.

Typically, the hottest topic—the one that accumulates the most postings in the shortest time—is one that has parallels all over The WELL. It's simply an ongoing status report where we let each other know how things are going in our own lives—who's kids are visiting, who finally went out with the new guy, who landed a job or gave a speech or marched in a demonstration, who's going to be in town next month and would like to get together for dinner. The temperature of WOW is different, depending on the internal dynamics at any given time; sometimes it feels intensely political, sometimes painfully personal, sometimes light and frothy as people banter back and forth.

My cohort and I practice a fairly laissez-faire management style; we keep the conversation going by asking questions or offering our own comments, but we don't make a huge effort to prevent topic drift, the phenomenon that turns a discussion about pornography into one about medicinal herbs. We figure that WOW, unlike some technically oriented conferences, is about communication among people; in that milieu, drift happens.

When I took over the WOW hostship three years ago, I promised to try to keep it a "safe haven" for women on The WELL. In retrospect, that was a naive expectation. It's still, by definition, a refuge from the testosterone that seems to dominate many other parts of cyberspace. Women are less hesitant, for instance, to ask "dumb technical questions" that they fear might be greeted with condescension or ignored completely in a public conference. WOW still feels different from the rest of The WELL; a lot of women view it as the center of their online universe and the larger WELL as something "out there."

I'm convinced that communication among women is qualitatively different from communication in a mixed group. In that sense, WOW is

unique. But we've learned over time that "all female" doesn't guarantee agreement on all issues, or truthfulness, or trust. My rule of thumb is "Don't say anything in WOW that you wouldn't want to see posted in the News conference." That may be an unnecessarily conservative attitude, but it's more realistic than assuming that all women, by virtue of possessing the same general anatomy, have each other's best interests at heart.

As The WELL has grown and its population diversified, the range of opinions, assumptions and experience within WOW has broadened, too. There are bound to be disagreements, and those disagreements are sometimes exacerbated by alliances and enmities formed elsewhere on The WELL. Sometimes people can transcend the differences of opinion that nearly brought them to virtual blows in the Politics or the Media conference; one WELL maxim says "attack the idea, not the person." As in the real world, though, some folks simply don't hit it off. It may be a matter of personal style, or cherished beliefs that another finds repugnant, or a Byzantine social history involving lovers past and present.

Last summer, WOW was the incubator for a 15-minute media monster called "The Cybercad Scandal." A gy on The WELL, it turned out, had been coming on to several women at once, swearing each of them to secrecy, telling her that she was his one-and-only, and making all the right noises about long-term potential. He was very good, apparently, at what he did. A couple of the women became suspicious, compared notes in email, then opened a topic in WOW. There was immediate consensus—rare, on The WELL—that we air the matter in public, to alert women who might not read WOW regularly to what this gy was up to. The resulting topic, number 1290 in the News conference, became, almost instantaneously, a firestorm. It raised all kinds of complex questions about social conduct in cyberspace. It was a watershed, of sorts, for The WELL, a loss of innocence.

The shock waves of "1290", as it's come to be called, are still rippling through The WELL. People are a lot more conscious of the possibility of "identity hacking"; they've learned that they can no longer assume, as my friend Barbara did in 1984, that everyone in Cyberspace is participating in the same consensual reality. A couple of the women who'd been involved with "Mr. K" say that they wouldn't have minded not being his exclusive interest, if only he hadn't lied to them. Game-playing is okay, as long as both parties realize that it's a game, and are playing by the same rules.

WOW saw an influx of new members, many of them drawn by the realization that it might be a useful place to reality-check some of their online relationships, during and after the Cybercad affair. Originally, we'd discouraged "naming names" in WOW, talking about people who weren't present to defend themselves, as a generally bad idea. 1290 made us rethink that attitude. In later incidents having to do with the conduct of WELLbeings outside WOW, the original guidelines have either proven valid or been subject to modification once more. Situations—Ethics—R Us.

I've learned a lot from hosting WOW. For one, you can't enforce behavior. I'm nobody's mommy, and I'm certainly not a cop. I come down pretty heavily on the confidentiality issue, and on mutual respect. Beyond that, WOW is what its participants make it. Whatever its mood at any given moment, it's always authentic, immediate, and reflective of the lives of the women involved. Every day, there's a handful of postings that sparkle, like gemstones. WOW has given me a precious gift, the opportunity to meet and connect with other women—strong, stubborn, talented and accomplished, quizzing, perhaps needy, but always remarkable—in a way that I could not have imagined, 10 short/long years ago.

There's an evolutionary aspect to living in cyberspace. Your monitor is no longer a flat, impermeable surface. It acquires depth, like Alice's mirror in *Through the Looking Glass*. It becomes an infinite space in which all that information, and all those other beings, reside. You come to regard modemless computers as poor, mute, stunted things, robbed of their full cybernetic birthright. Something happens to you, too: text at 9600 bps is a blur at first; eventually, you climb the perceptual curve to where you can skim and then comprehend, a full scroll.

Interacting with text in motion has a downside, though: the printed page is so static, by comparison, and the words don't glow. The browsing I do to evaluate search results on the fly, or to see if a conference thread interests me, wreaks havoc with my powers of concentration. When I read a book these days, I have to remind myself to *slow down*, focus, read for style as well as content. That goes for other aspects of offline life as well: It's all too easy to go into browse mode at a party, skimming conversations for the "good parts" and dismissing people who don't appear to be, at first glance, as vivid as your online playmates. When I catch myself being artsy because real life is so sluggish, I

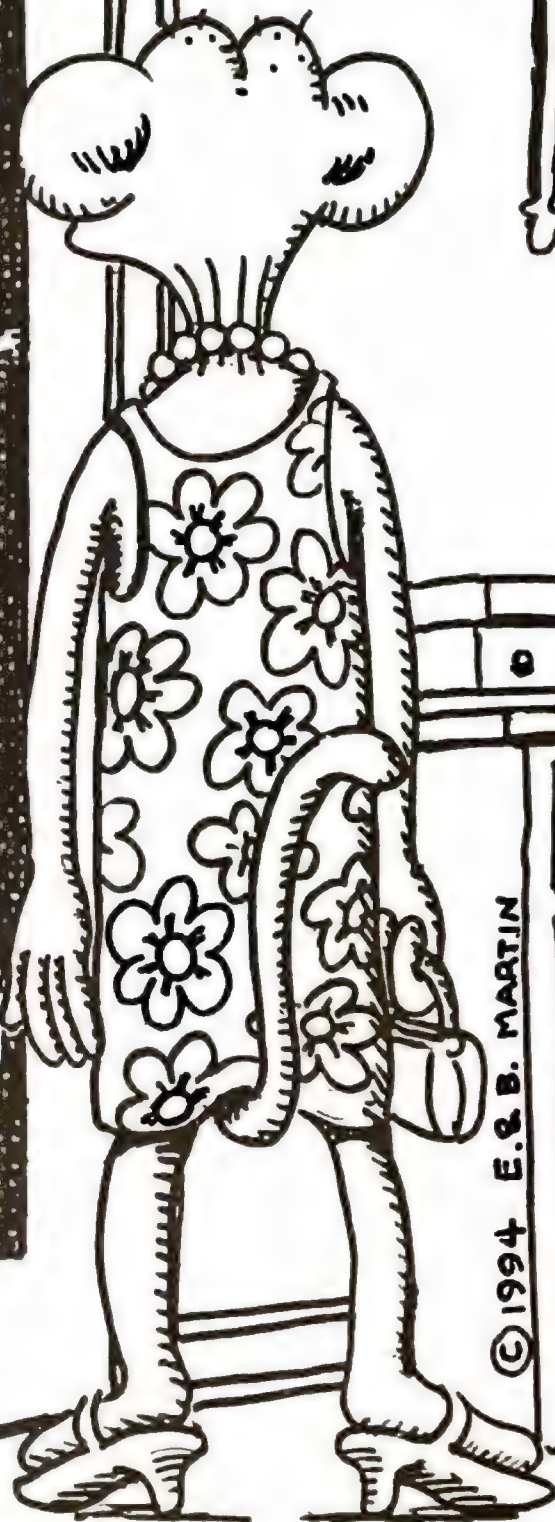
know for sure that it's time to log off for a while—regroup, recalibrate, reconnect.

Though it's easy to distinguish between the two, it's getting harder by the minute to dismiss cyberspace as less "real", somehow, than meat-life. Early cyberlit talked about surgically installing docking points for the appropriate electrodes (behind the ear, like an anti-seasickness patch, is a favored spot) to facilitate jacking in to The Net. But there's a substantial population of relatively normal human beings already adapting to life online, like the first amphibians, using nothing more than their computers and their imaginations. All of us who cruise Netspace are part of an extended, collective consciousness, an instantaneous, shared form of communication made possible and sustained by the ubiquity and interconnection of the Matrix. It's almost a life form in itself, part human and part machine. Jacking in expands and enhances our perceptions, puts us in touch with the Hive Mind, and lets us play tricks with time and space. Whether we turn out to be a functional adaptation, or an evolutionary dead-end, remains to be seen, but I suspect the former.

I do have a life offline—a carbon-based partner, three rambunctiously non-virtual cats, and a real house with windows and walls, dust bunnies and a view of live oaks and San Francisco Bay. I cook, eat party, go hiking, and space out at *Grateful Dead* shows. A lot of those things happen in the company of people I also hang out with online: some of my most cherished connections are with folks I wouldn't have crossed paths with any other way. There's an aura to many of these relationships, a shimmer of additional understanding and empathy that comes from our knowing each other in both dimensions. But, hey—some of my best friends are modemless. I know—and not just because they tell me—that spending half one's life in cyberspace is atypical behavior. I know that my perspective is skewed. But I've discovered life on the Net, and I can never go back. ☾

Reva Basch is a writer, net-surfer and consultant to the online information industry. She's written a book called *Secrets of the Super Searchers: The accumulated wisdom of 23 of the world's top online searchers* (Online Inc., Wilton, CT, 1993). Her flesh-self lives and works in Berkeley, CA; her cyber-soul can usually be found at [reva@well.com](mailto:reva@well.com)

Monkey Boy!™



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# garage virtual real reality

Eric S. Theise, [verve@well.com](mailto:verve@well.com)

The media spotlight that burned so brightly on virtual reality in the early 1990s has swept on to other things (ah, Internet, we hardly knew ye). This has been a Good Thing for VR. Its practitioners no longer have to devote their waking hours to questions about *The Lawnmower Man*. Instead, they've been able to return to the Real Work calling from the lab.

Or from the garage...as Linda Jacobson's newest book makes abundantly clear, some of the most exciting and accessible developments in virtual reality are coming from the hackers and hobbyists, not NASA or the **HIT Lab**. And they're working with equipment that you, dear reader, have a prayer of being able to afford.

What's here? A history of world-changing tinkerers. A contour map of the tributaries feeding the ocean that's come to be known as VR. A friendly taxonomy of virtual interface technologies, including hardware (reality engines, windshields, and cockpits) and software (fuel).

There are profiles of garage VR pioneers: Randy Pausch, Joe Gradecki, Doug Faxon, Bernie Roehl, Jerry Isdale, Eric Townsend, Mark Pflaging, and FWI's own Jon 'n' Paco, whose writings (FAQs, pivotal essays, and small-press publications), code (notably *REND386*), and worlds have sparked the possibilities of affordable VR. Throughout, there's enough gentle agitprop to encourage wymyn to try their hands at garage VR.

The book's most important contribution is its synthesis of writings, code, diagrams, and schematics culled from the net and obscure hardcopy. This is the first time these resources have been available between two covers. Want to wire a PowerGlove to your PC (or Mac or Amiga)? Want to build your own head-mounted, stereoscopic display? The instructions are here; just add solder, salvage, sweat, and duct tape. If you've got *Intel Inside™*, you can use the software that comes with the book to explore existing virtual worlds, get a PowerGlove up and running, and start build-

ing your own applications with a full-featured version of *Virtual Reality Studio 1*.

My PowerGlove on, LEDs flashing and ultrasounds emitting, I give this book a virtual but heart-felt thumbs-up.  $\$6$

text by Linda Jacobson

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includes DOS software on 3.5" diskette

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Eric S. Theise is co-founder of Bay Area Internet Literacy and producer of the "Jacking In" series at Modern Times Bookstore in San Francisco's Mission District. His Liberty Hill Cyberwerks consults on matters of Internet connectivity and network education.

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Musician, mother and herbalist **Alaura P-Orridge** has weathered the storms that tend to strike the lives of women on the fringe. Some know her as **Paula P-Orridge** of the seminal industrial band **Throbbing Gristle**, others are familiar with the work she does for political causes: notably, the effort to free Tibet. In the eyes of techno and ambient fans from her native England to San Francisco to Goa, she's the mother of Rave with her former band, **Psychic TV**. And while many admired her openness as a public pioneer in the now-trendy "modern primitive" realm, British governmental officials and the media represented **Alaura** and her husband as child-sacrificing Satanists, ultimately driving them from the UK and seizing their personal possessions—including libraries of printed and taped communications with Bryon Gysin, William S. Burroughs and countless others. **Alaura's** liner notes to the experimental **Psychic TV** album *Cold Dark Matter* describe the violation and shock of these events, and the P-Orridges's exile in Tibet. Now maintaining a pleasant refuge in Northern California, **Alaura** has signed with **Silent Records** (contact: Kim Cascone, 1 415 957 1320). Last year we sat down one evening, put on a Kate Bush CD, and talked about women in an age of men and machines. In addition to musical collaboration with **Justin Beck** and **Ched i Sabbah**, she'll begin a series of lectures on *Women and Magic* this June. —*magdalen*

**fwr:** Technologically you're working on the music end of things. Obviously when you're talking about working on events, raves and parties (with people like *Hyperdelic*, *Psychic TV* and *Throbbing Gristle*) there aren't a lot of women doing the music.

**alaura:** When I was at school and I met Gen, being Genesis P-Orridge, then of *Throbbing Gristle*, I really didn't have that much interest in music or technology. It was through Gen that I met other musicians and other people that were working in media and artistic evaluation. My first gig was with a band called the *Twenty-Three Skiddoo*. I played vibes. Then I went on to sound manipulation.

I've never seen myself as a technological person. I see myself as being very intuitive; when I play with *Psychic TV*, or do any music with my tapes, I never line them up, and I never listen to them through my headphones. I put them all in and then I decide which one to play, which knob to turn up. It's very instinctual.

I've met so many people, ranging from Kate Bush to Timothy Leary to William Burroughs, and lots of people in the music industry. I've never felt any barriers with working with anyone. I'd like to mention more female names, but in the last twelve years I've really worked in a male world. I may meet someone, and it's like, wow, they're really intellectual, and I definitely haven't read as many books as them, but I just stand my ground, where I belong in myself. The main people I don't connect with are computer people.

**fwr:** What's a circumstance where you've felt distanced from computer people?

**alaura:** Gen and I went up to a conference in Newcastle a couple of years ago, on media and technology, and Gen gave a talk there. It was an all male panel with one woman. I sat in the audience and I saw they were building walls and barriers with this piece of wire and this bit of brick, and I thought, "but there's more to it than just this." So there was a question and answer session, and I popped my hand up and said, "I'm sorry, but I've listened to what you've had to say, and I really think that you are trying to overcompensate with technology", because while women are coming more into the sciences now, 99% of scientists have been men. And with computers, it's always been unbalanced. They [men] overcompensate because they don't give birth. They're always trying to create something because they can't give birth (*laughing*).

**fwr:** I've never conceived, I've never had a child, but I know that I can. Do you think that makes a difference?

**alaura:** Yes. I worked with a shaman; an Apache/Cheyenne shaman. I think he really summed it up when he said, "Women carry their memories in their womb." It's much easier for women to become attached to the person they're making love with because it's directly connected to their womb, and, through that, to their memories. So many men's hearts are disconnected from their brains. Even men that I know that want to empathize with women, who talk about women and women's rights, they're not truly empathic. And whether it's because biologically we're different, because we have a womb...if men went through gestation and gave birth, I really don't feel that

there would be many men who would go to war and destroy life.

When we complain about men, "Why are they like that?" we must remember that all men were born of woman. I'm carrying a lineage of history that is of my mother's, and my grandmother's, and her grandmother's; my generation of women were wiped out. They were tortured and murdered in the burning times. We have to remember, but we don't. We're not told that our lineage was wiped out. It amplifies how terrified men are of women. I want to find out where this complete fear comes from. Does it come from the fact that they just can't give birth? Why was their fear so strong that they had to murder us? It's a really important issue, because women still are being suppressed. We have to fight for the laws to do what we want with our own bodies.

I am interested in technology, but I'm more interested in who I am and what my lineage is. Women are healers, and we all have to be retaught that we have that power.

**fwr:** It's almost as though, with the advent of the male scientist/doctor establishment, we have lost birth. Childbirth used to be a time when women came together. Now we're supposed to trust some guy with rubber gloves on to birth our children.

**alaura:** That's a fine example of how women's rights have been eroded, to where you don't have the right to your own body. I've had two children, and both of them were born at home. Legally, in England, you have to have the first one in hospital, and I just went to the hospital and said, "No, I'm going to have a natural birth." They said, "Well, that's fine dear. But when you come in, you have to take a drug to keep you from being sick, and you have to take Oxytocin to expel the placenta." I said, "I'm having no drugs." As a woman concerning my own baby, I was being ignored. So *Caresse* and *Jeunesse* were both born by radical midwives. With *Caresse*, we locked the door and locked the doctor out. Here in America, my closest friends are midwives, and just to hear what they have to put up with...the insurance for midwives, you have to have a doctor present...it's so sad that we can't just be midwives again, that those rights have been taken away.

**fwr:** What do you envision as a realistic strategy for women? Should we be really vocal, public,

political and use the tactics of the system to get noticed? Or should we inhabit our own secret sort of world, where we are healers and midwives, and just sneak around and do it?

**alaura:** I don't think we have to sneak. In every given situation, there's a right moment, and a right tactic. It's important for us, as women, that we go about our ways with natural medicine, with healing and with bringing a child into this world naturally. That's one of the best things you can do for a child.

I don't think that we should be secret. To be secret is to be ashamed. We don't have anything to be ashamed of. By being secret, we are buying into the whole system. They used to torture us and murder us, and now they can jail us and take away our children. As women, we are incredibly controlled by secrecy. Because we don't break the

"How do we fix your box?" And I just said, "Give me the screwdriver."

silence, we become victims of sexual and domestic violence. We need reeducation.

Men are not conditioned to respect women from an early age. There are men that are working on that, and these wonderful men say about the other men, "Oh god, men!" But it's really up to us now to take it into our own hands. We want to witness women coming into their own. As individuals, we can change things by being there, by being examples to other women, by showing our inner strength. It's like a web that will grow, covering the planet.

**fwr:** Do you feel that **happening** now?

**alaura:** Oh yes, especially in California; there is a real web there. It's like a trampoline. You can fall back on it and bounce right back up. Any woman can plug into that community. If we picture that in technology, it's like having a board, and we are the microchips, but we are plugging into each other, we don't need to go through a computer.

**fwr:** We can just **hook up** directly.

**alaura:** Yes. You know, I've just thought of something. Gen and I did this interview for MTV Eu-

rope, and again, I was the only woman. I went on a roll, started talking about women and our rights. At one point, the interviewer, who was very sweet, asked us, "What's your advice to an individual on how to destabilize society?" And I said, "It's easy for women, there's a lot of things they can do." I said that women should just menstruate and bleed and bleed, and not buy tampons and not buy sanitary towels (*laughter*). We buy into that secrecy and that "Oh my god, I'm bleeding and it's shameful and I'll take the blood and you won't see anything, and I'll throw my bloody knickers away." Someone asked me afterwards, "Is that what you do?" I said, "Well, I bleed onto these cotton pads, then I soak them in water that I throw into the garden so that it grows back." This kind of goes back to what you were saying before, that you haven't conceived, but you know that you can. Each month you bleed, and you know that you

have the ability to create life whenever you choose to. And that's a big deal.

Reclaiming our own bodies goes hand in hand with reclaiming myself and my religion, being a Pagan. It's important for me to be able to worship the land and not be called a Satanist; I'm doing what's completely natural to me.

I was in New York a couple of years ago, in Manhattan, and we got to Tompkins Square. It was amazing walking through this square and watching the homeless people build this little village. It was almost Neolithic, as though we'd gone back in time. Without sounding patronizing, like "Oh how quaint", I was walking around through it and I felt safe, it was very calm yet there was a great energy...people were building sculptures, putting flowers in and taking flowers out... I turned to Gen, and said, "These people have more than all the other people in their concrete houses." The people in Tompkins Square were on the Earth. And that connection is the most solid thing of all. Not to say that their life wasn't hard, because it is. It's almost as if progression is regression; we need to regress a few thousand years (*laughter*).

**fwr:** That brings me back to the technology issue. For many years, I was reasonably anti-tech. I grew

up in the 80s with this very large specter of a nuclear threat over my head, and I just went, "Well, technology is this bad side-effect of some really fucked up men." In the last few years, I've been trying to embrace it as part of the progression and the regression, to accept it as something that could be helpful to the goals that we have as women.

**alaura:** I'm really not a technological person myself, but I think men and women use technology differently. For example, I recently did a gig at the Quake on Haight Street. My box is six cassette decks built into one flight case, and a mixer on top. My box went ahead to the Quake, and Craig, who I was working with, rang me up and said, "How do you set up your box?" You know, I didn't ever set up my box on my own. I always had roadies, and when we arrived at **gigs**, the equipment would be taken off and I would go deal with all the business in the office. I'd get back, and the box would be set up. It was hysterical at the Quake because the boys didn't know how to do it, so I got there and said, "Oh, I don't know. You just plug this in there, and this in there, and it's done." But, it still didn't work. Well, the techno gys, including Craig and Andy from *Hyperdelic*, were like, "How do we fix your box now?" And I just said, "Give me the screwdriver." So, I undid all the parts, and put them back together and it worked. I did it instinctually. That's how I use technology. I think most women do the same.

**fwr:** I know that I do. On those rare occasions when I'm using technology and something good is happening, I'm using it purely intuitively; when I accomplish something and manage to overcome all the problems that always seem to arise, it's not that different from working with living things.

**alaura:** Technology is here, it can be creative for us. I definitely want to get more involved with computers. I wanted to stay outside and be an observer, and I'm ready to come in now. Before, I was saying that I don't meet people that intimidate me. But maybe it's technology that's intimidating because it is **alien** to me. I'm the one making the choice of when to switch it on and when to switch it off.

**fwr:** I used to perceive technology as this male thing. I wasn't getting to turn on the computer. Some **big** computer was on all the time and had control over me.



**alaura:** Yeah, it's like I have this kind of shy interest in knowing how the machines work. The men that I was around before, while I wasn't intimidated by them as individuals, sometimes I felt intimidated by their knowledge. And I definitely felt there was an attitude towards me, being a woman. I'm just hoping that I will work with more women.

I haven't met many women on the creative level in the music industry. I've had to deal with more women in the business end of it. I've done a lot of the business. I've run a record company, but I'm just not into those games, and sometimes it's been a disadvantage. Different doors are opening for me now, and I'm hoping I'll find other women to work with creatively. In the meantime, my circle of friends is made of very female-oriented women, and I get together with women on the full moon 46

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**SAMS**  
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Me

I.  
al pntlg, and I am a female  
cybercad. I live in a small house in  
this incolachis,jkye outsing arnism tow  
ar'heoseneouta r om,  
gad.cy can monll hy acean erc yber the  
me o  
warcliffs.  
Ennicken moll hy wath  
qn  
Mll

I am humdog, and I am a female  
cybercad. I live in a small house in  
this village, just outside the main town  
at the end of a long road. I can see  
the ocean if I look out over the cliffs.  
Every evening, I watch the sun fall  
bleeding into the ocean, and I can  
hear the blood hiss when it falls  
into the water. In the distance, always,  
I hear the bagpipers. I think their names  
are Jay and Joshua. They play for the  
death of the sun. This ritual is  
very important to me.

I am a poetic terrorist. I am a bomber  
who uses words instead of explosives.  
Some people love me for this; other  
people hate me.

Sometimes I have lapses; sometimes  
I go polite on myself. That female  
doormat thing is inculturated in all  
western european females, pretty much.  
It is hard to fight., but I do fight it. In  
me, the doormat thing comes out as  
self-censorship. *Self-censorship is a  
form of dishonesty, I think.* I fight  
that tendency in myself continuously.

*I am a post-feminist female.* At the same  
time, because I love opera, I sometimes  
will say that I am Tosca—the impetuous  
artist who lives for beauty. Beauty and  
art are my passions, and so I defend them  
to the best of my ability. I also defend  
my right to be exactly the kind of woman  
that I am.

The most honest thing I can say about the net  
is that it has fucked up my status quo. This  
is the danger of the net. People learn to speak  
their interiors here without reservation. When



humdog@well.com  
i am a woman in cyberspace. i do not  
know exactly why my gender matters, but  
it matters a great deal. i don't like that.

one speaks from the interior, one will know others, one will be known by others in a very naked kind of way that is not for everybody. The need to express feeling and consciousness and experience is stronger in humans than any other need, I think. *Surrendering the interior map of yourself also means that your safety is surrendered.* I have done that. It is okay with me. For me, not to take that risk, even if it seems crazy to others, is a form of slow suicide. But I may not be like anyone else. After all, I am humdog.

**i am a woman in cyberspace. i do not know exactly why my gender matters, but it matters a great deal. i don't like that.**

having a female voice on the net is interesting. first of all, you learn that all the talk you hear about woman's voice and the place of woman's voice is real. *cyberspace does not favor the intuitive process.* it is linear and logical and it does not care if you not linear or conventionally logical. in cyberspace, people usually go one of two ways—they either do not believe you are a real person, or they overbelieve in your reality. either version is an example of what beaudrillard called hyper-reality.

*in cyberspace, everyone is a simulation of themselves.* because of this, people are more willing and able to act like assholes. they do it because they feel that there is no penalty for bad manners. the main example of this is the phenomenon called the flame war. the flame war is sort of unique to cyberspace. in a flame war, everybody sends as many hostile messages as possible to each other, without editing for wit or intellectual content. in my flame war, the climax was reached when the loyal opposition said that i had *somebody's virtual dick* in my mouth. this remark was obviously sexist on several levels, not to mention obscene. it was obscene because it was colonial discourse. it was also a lame remark, but that is another thing. the man who said it felt that he was free to say that. cyberspace does that to people sometimes, i think.

**people say that women are afraid of cyberspace. i think that people should stop saying that. it is not women who are afraid of cyberspace, it is people. the people who are afraid of cyberspace should get over it. people who write long philosophical letters about whether or not humdog is different from my earthliness should get over it. i am a fireball on earth. i am a fireball in cyberspace. it is, to me, all the same thing.**

—humdog@well.com

16'

4:25

It all started innocently enough. Just a few playful, unsolicited email messages from an unidentified woman from another system. (That's online, not *solar*, fringies—jeez... peel your face off that *X Files* rerun, ferchrissake.) As I was saying, this woman whom I had never met, nor exchanged vital ASCII with, started sending me somewhat coquettish email messages without warning. I was baffled, yet curious. Women are rare in the male-dominated sweatlodge of cyberspace, and actively flirtatious women rarer still. Sure, plenty of sleazy come-ons occur, but I'll bet my Y chromosomes that 99% are male-to-female, or, in the case of those unwitting sex hogs aching to pump QWERTY spurts at anything that sa-shays across their screen, male-to...erm... *male*. Having never had an unsavory email experience, I found myself responding—almost automatically—to her messages, with no regard for future complications. At first, her transmissions consisted of playful questions about obscure pop culture tidbits—ID quizzes for the terminally hip, I suppose—but they later became increasingly personal. Despite my mild paranoid tendencies, my knee jerk <respond> reflex kept kicking in, and I unwittingly revealed more and more of myself to this mystery woman. Big mistake.

In the beginning, you see, it was no big deal. Her messages just became part of my weekly email

talking between midnight and 2 am—repeatedly. Finally, one night, after about 8 hang-ups in the space of about 20 minutes, I answered. "HELLO!" I bellowed. Nada. Dead air. Right before I was about to slam down the receiver in disgust, a distant voice said "It's Astrid." [insert Twilight Zone theme here] Peachy. I decided to ask a few questions of my own. All were met with evasive, cryptic replies, all in the same distant, uneasy voice. **Bughouse, I thought.** A true loon. I terminated the conversation, frustrated and slightly angry.

Two weeks later a Christmas card appeared, complete with photo booth mugshots of the woman in question. (No, she wasn't *nekkid*, you pervs!) How'd she get my address? Ya got me. I should probably reveal here that she had already seen photos of me, in a magazine which shall remain nameless. But no, it wasn't *Honcho ferchrissake*, what kind of *gy* do you think I am anyway? More cryptic prose, charged somehow with the knowledge that she was getting me where I lived. Literally. This wasn't no disembodied cybergrope, this was *real*. A little *too real* for my taste, in fact. And it ain't over. This multimedia come-on continues to this day—email, telephone, snail mail, the works—and shows no sign of waning, despite my obvious lack of interest.

Yes, as you probably can tell by now, I'm a tad annoyed. But mere annoyance doesn't do jus-

condom, please. I mean. I would like to shrug off these electronic advances as if they were the product of some low-grade AI, spewing permuted versions of my own text back at me, but I can't. Despite the mechanical, *sans serif* nature of these virtual valentines, I know there's a flesh 'n' blood person on the other side of the wires, and I'm a bit of a sap when it comes to hurting people's feelings. I try to tell myself it's only ASCII, but it's charged somehow with the human element, which endows the messages with the tangible violation of an actual hotpinch. Give me a lovesick Replicant any day, I could always tell her, honestly, that her emotions aren't *real*, that they belong to someone's dead niece, and that would be the end of it. Unfortunately, I can't escape this essential fact: electronic mediation cannot completely erase the human element, even in its most disembodied states.

It's possible that you're conjecturing about the size of the log I have up my ass. Most het males claim they would die for a woman to come on strong—you know, grab the crotch and yank—but the ugly truth is that many of them wouldn't know what to do if this actually happened. Some might even run away, their balls hightailing it for the body cavity. Now I have had my share of being scoped out, propositioned, etc., usually by gay men, and although in a way it's flattering, it usually happens in a situation where sex is the last

I thought, as I caught a graying, gay-identified boomer eyeing my ass in the weight room, ahhh... so this is how women feel in public every day

sifting routine. Then the phone calls started. Now I don't have to tell you that I didn't offer my phone number to this woman. I hate the telephone. I am a shameless screener. If I had been born before the days of answering machines, I might have hung myself by my own jockstrap. No, the enterprising young thing hacked my number through a crude trick of information technology—by calling local information. For several weeks we had a case of an immovable object meeting and irresistible force, that is, a compulsive screener meeting a compulsive hanger upper. Not a good way to get on my good side. This was compounded by the fact that she would call well into the night—we're

uce to the strange blend of emotions this mediated come-on has conjured up. I gotta ask myself—Why does this irk me? As a slightly vain het male with ego to spare, I should be loving this stuff. But I'm not. The traditional objectification argument doesn't apply, as she can't scope me as she transmits her veiled love notes. Thank gopod that videophones aren't a reality (and let's squash that little techno-fantasy right now, OK? No fuggin' way am I gonna answer one of those things). It's all text, and occasionally voice, transmission. My body is safe (for now) but my consciousness isn't. Is this the future of unpleasant human encounters? Text-to-text? Mind-to-mind? Pass the cortex

thing on my mind (even if I were gay or bi). In fact, the overt implication of sex, in these situations, is primarily an annoyance. I'm talking when you're waiting on line at the DMV on Kafka St. or sweating through some pec flyes at the gym. When I first noticed my uneasiness in one of these situations, a veil was lifted. I thought, as I caught a graying, gay-identified boomer eyeing my ass in the weight room, ahhh... so this is how women feel in public every day. Of course, my 6 foot 3 inch frame and testosterone count prevent me from being able to understand fully the implicit physical threat of a direct come-on, as I would probably be able to defend myself. I was propos-

homed at the tender age of 17 by a 6 foot 8 inch  
200 pound linebacker type named Lee who could  
have made me do whatever he desired, but that's a  
more thing for a gy. The funny thing was, he wanted  
to suck my dick. So much for my naive concep-  
tions of sexual power relations.

What these situations have done for me, ulti-  
mately, is they have made me all too aware of the  
undeserved power of the male gaze. That is not to  
say that the gazer has to tote a bozack between the  
legs, it's all a power relation thang when it comes  
to sex. Not to glorify the phallus or anything (I  
know, I know, it's always a "dick thing" with us  
gys), but the power relations of sexuality are as  
interchangeable as a strap-on dildo. One minute he's  
wearing it, next minute she's wearing it, and for  
those burdened with religious guilt, *God's* wear-  
ing it. Whoever deploys this power has the poten-  
tial to oppress, intimidate, irritate, or occasionally  
turn on the object of hir desire. And being the  
object of desire is a limited, confining role—un-  
less you've chosen to play it. I did not. Although  
my current electronic "pen pal" is biologically female,  
I am the victim of her gaze, in a dynamic that  
would traditionally be identified as male aggres-  
sor-to-female receptor. And I gotta say it ain't all  
that fun. Women of the world, you get my props  
for dealing with this age-old dynamic so gracefully.

Lest you think I'm a Morrissey fan, or a  
Trappist monk, I'll admit that an e-come-on *might*  
work on me, but the M.O. of my e-stalker would  
have to be so cartoonish as to be purely in the realm  
of strokebook fantasy. If Astrid had, ferinstance,  
swaggered into my mailbox like Grace Jones,  
brandishing lines from PJ Harvey, and punctuat-  
ing each delicious sentence with a 6 inch stiletto  
heel point to my forehead, I might have taken  
notice. You see, I like *strong* women. I mean,  
cock the pump shotgun with one hand kinda  
women. But I'm afraid I will have to wait for the  
grand opening of B&D VRcade to satisfy my Linda  
Hamilton fetish. Meanwhile, I have to live with  
an all too real e-aggressor, and I'm thinking about  
cutting my wires. 1/6



●宛先 二一〇五、九一東京芝局私書箱二〇七号  
永谷園東西名画選セットプレゼント係  
●抽選 毎週土曜日



# seduced & abandoned

Pat Cadigan, cadigan@well.com

Pat Cadigan is not synthetic. She carries credentials from the cyberpunk nonmovement a la Mirmirrhodes et al, and she's author of *Synners*, *Fools*, *Dirty Work*, and other technophillic phantasies that you have, of course, in your library...don't you? Well? Then we suggest you put this zine aside, hop on your bike, and pedal to the local Book Chop for copies of all. There's a great foto of Pat, leather jacket and all, on the back cover of *Dirty Work*, btw. According to her friends and many acquaintances, she is lively and lots of phun...The following is a speech delivered at *Seduced and Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World at the Institute for Contemporary Art in London, 12 Mar 94.* —joe

Up until 1984, when I was 12, the only virtual reality I had ever experienced was the one between my feet and the ground. So I can't claim to be a pioneer in the present, or a visionary. I'm not a scientist—nor am I likely to be a pioneer in the future, my feet provided up until recently... because, fortunately, to the contrary, I am in fact younger than Gutsaberg, and younger even than the Gutenberg Bible as well.

As a science fiction writer, I had found my toes open to many virtual worlds long before my work. I could walk, or swim, or fly, or be the hellbird that we, and a few other people, or the paranoid alien, or many others, I wanted, a monster from outer space and my laws are even worse.

But mostly, I chose to focus on trying to second-guess the near future. I call this the oh-Christ-what's-next approach.

The one thing that all of these forms of SF have in common with each other, and with every other form of literature is, they're all primitive virtual reality.

No, I'm not going to stand up here and tell you that the printed word is the first form of VR and the best and must be preserved at all costs, although I would of course very much like to stay in print, thank you. But my own personal criterion for judging the quality of a book is quite simple: if, while I'm reading, the words disappear and I'm watching the movie in my head, it's a good book.

And when I first encountered the idea of virtual reality, I immediately began producing virtual reality about virtual reality.

So far, all of my novels have had to do with some form of virtual reality—have I said the words

"virtual reality" often enough yet?—But my second novel, *Synners*, was directly concerned with its commercial application as entertainment. And let's face it, when you think about it, it's not so terribly inaccurate to say that we've done some of our best work for the sake of relieving our boredom, ennui, or Weltschmerz.

I gave my virtual reality some virtual residents—what's a virtual world, after all, without a virtual population—including people with dual citizenship: i.e., In There and Out Here. I found long after the fact that I had identified two kinds of VR participants—those who wanted to bring the VR out from inside and show it to everyone, and those who wanted to crawl in from the outside and pull the door shut after them. Reduced to its simplest elements, the dilemma for the main characters is choosing which way they want to go—In or Out.

Perhaps that is exactly what I see that *(what?)* did not. Perhaps the 15 years in cyberspace—what they've done to me, there does have not to

I had identified two kinds of VR participants—those who wanted to bring the VR out from inside and show it to everyone, and those who wanted to crawl in from the outside and pull the door shut after them

be these parallel divisions between people. I will be reluctant to argue which is better than the other—the thing to do will be simply to engineer some way in which the two types can co-exist.

Although I HAVE lived long enough—even if I am slightly younger than Gutsaberg—to know that the universe is not only stranger than we imagine but stranger than we CAN imagine, and so I'm probably being shortsighted in identifying only two types. Perhaps the future of VR is more than bisexual, and perhaps in the future gender will be more of a job description and less a designation of genitals.

In *Fools*, my novel most recently published in the UK, I realized that I had made VR inextricably intertwined with identity—sense of self. And I think about it—are you different in different places? Is the you who goes to the bank the same you that goes to a party? (And if the answer is yes, how's your credit rating?)

Face it, we spend our lives listening to external tell us who we are. We're young, hip, happening people who know what we want and aren't shy about going to get it, or we're mature, wise individuals who deserve the best life has to offer. Or YOU'RE a man of the 90s or a woman who isn't afraid to make her needs known. I don't know about you, but I'm flattered. I just wish it all didn't turn out to be some company sucking up to me in the hope that I'll buy their brand of soap.

Anyway, in the *Fools* universe, marketing has bypassed the product and gone right to identity. Why bother trying to get someone to cough up the money to be represented by an expensive teen life? Cadillac when you can just sell them the person they want to be? Why buy designer clothes? LIPSY City? Why not just have City? Or what? At all times you're not really City. Buy... what? You're just in a reality in which you're who you are. Am I? You? Or are you delusional?

I can't even that question. Or maybe I should to answer on the grounds that I don't want to define myself, or delineate myself, or custom myself.

The fact is, I don't want to give you the answers—even just my own thoughts and ideas—and I don't want yours. What I want—what I think we should all seek from life, from reality, virtual or tickled, from our dreams, or those externalized or not—are suggestions for new questions. I don't want another answer. I want a new question. I want to ask a question that no one's ever asked before.

To that end, I leave you with the two thoughts that drive me, and have always driven me: from Kurt Vonnegut—"We become what we pretend to be, so we must be very careful about what we pretend to be."

And from e.e. cummings: "Listen—there's a hell of a good universe next door—let's go." 1/6

Lily

iLily

Lily

Lily

Scotto, MOORE57518@cobra.unl.edu

From: Lily  
To: Andrew

hi, andrew, it's me again. i realize i've been pestering you a lot in personal mail these days, but...after our three hour irc session the other night, i sort of feel... i guess "attached" is the word i'm looking for. to you. attached to you. in a way i haven't experienced via electronic mail before. i wonder if i might ask you a few personal questions?

all we are in email is who we say we are, i mean, that's established, right? we "are" what we say. we "are" our words. and everything that "you" have said to me... all the words you've given me... how can i say this? no one else has ever spoken to me like that. no one else has ever given me what you gave me. i was at a very very low, umm, desperate, dangerous point. and in three hours, and a few pieces of email, you and i have become... some kind of "we", haven't we?

i'm young. i'm impetuous. i know that. and i'm not suggesting we throw away our lives and travel across the globe on the spur on the moment, or anything like that. i just... uh, i guess i just want to be a little happier than i am right now, and... talking a little more with you might do the trick.

if you haven't figured out what i'm not-so-subtly hinting at, or pointing at, or whatever...well, let me know. :)

Lily

\*\*\*

From: Andrew  
To: Lily

Lily,

> if you haven't figured out what i'm not-so-subtly hinting at, or pointing at,  
> or whatever...well, let me know. :)

I think I got the general drift of the idea. :)

I closed that IRC session the other night with a sense of... maybe euphoria is too strong a word... but then again, maybe not. I'm a secluded person by nature. I don't have many friends. I don't often get a chance to say so much, and I don't often get a chance to listen. Here we are, two young students at the U. of Internet, feeling equally lonely and lost in our surroundings, and reaching out across slipspace to touch someone else's hand. It's sad in a way, but it's also liberating -- without these screens in front of us, we never would have met.

In short, I don't mind you "pestering" me with personal mail. :)

In fact, I don't think it would hurt to get even more personal...do you?

Andrew

\*\*\*

From: Lily  
To: Andrew

In fact, I don't think it would hurt to get even more personal...do you?

somehow i knew, andrew, that you and i were going to be close. yes, let's get even more personal. i can tell you a few things right now, in fact, although i must admit... Well, i never expected this medium to alter so desperately the way i viewed society, the way i viewed "people", the way i viewed...well, you, of course. ;) i can tell you what i do with my time: student at the u. of internet is frighteningly accurate. i devote a great deal of time to muds, irc, mailing lists, and whatnot. for various reasons, i am unable to face people in person. i'm unable to mingle, unable to read the signs and cues that people use to transmit information in person. body language eludes me. i have been very lonely, needless to say. the internet is the only way i have to learn about people, see how they interact, discover what draws them together.

and i'm doing my best to picture you, andrew, i have to admit; to picture what being in the same room with you might be like. would i freeze? run? hide? this comfortable buffer of words between us is at once my safety net and my prison; what if i never experience your touch, what if i never feel you against me, what if what if what if?



could you, perhaps, send me a picture of yourself?

my friends have warned me to be careful, that often times these words can be used to create facades that are false, illusions that are dangerous, traps that are deadly. but what has happened between you and i speaks of a resonance that is undeniable -- no one could have touched me the way you did without the same inherent ... feelings that i have, and, uh... this is where it gets mushy, so i'm going to stop.

write me soon.

lily From: Andrew  
To: Lily

\*\*\* Lily,

>could you, perhaps, send me a picture of yourself?

That would be a major step indeed, wouldn't it.

I'm not sure. I'm not sure at all. I'm experiencing a kind of vertigo, you see. That a woman who exists clear across the globe from me could have such a magnetic pull on me is somehow absurd to begin with; that I should be such a prepared to sacrifice everything to maintain this relationship is downright dangerous. I've been wanting to meet you again in XAO, or in a talk session, but I am afraid of what might slip out, what words might escape me that might shatter your perception of me entirely. And there are other things involved, other forces.

>my friends have warned me to be careful, that often times these words can be used to create facades that are false, illusions that are dangerous, traps that

Listen to me, Lily: these words demonstrate resonance, to be sure, but the nature of this language is inherently one of deception, or, at the least, of misunderstanding. We need to be careful here! I need to go away for a while and think about all of this. I'm not sure of anything any more.

You don't even know what I look like!

Andrew

\*\*\*

From: Lily  
To: Andrew

hey, dearest. it's been a damn long time since i've heard from you. you're making it painfully difficult for me to get through the day. images of you constantly float across my visual field -- ok, so i've never actually seen you, but that doesn't stop the images, and that doesn't stop my brain from calling those images "andrew". my brain thinks you're very attractive. :)

seriously, we need to talk. i've been getting deeper and deeper into this relationship, almost against my will, and i'm not sure how to handle it. i have so much at stake emotionally, and this is such a ... um, 'fragile' medium ... you see psyches crack up around here all the time from the stress of having 'no face' to attach to the words that float past ... and i still cling to this ideal that says, fuck it, faces should not matter, SHOULD NOT MATTER, when you can love a person's words so much, love the way a person tries to squeeze his heart into empty words, transmit messages soul to soul via little packets of information. you're right, i don't know what you look like, but...for fuck's sake, we're at an age in history where technology can help us transcend all that, right?

i agree: let's be careful. but there comes a time when you need to throw care to the wind! i don't care any longer about facades. craft your facade any way you want. i have never experienced this thrill before, and i am prepared to follow it to the end of the internet, as it were.

don't leave me alone here, andrew. two days is too long. write me. tell me your deepest secrets. let's be in love, okay?

lily

\*\*\*

From: Andrew

To: Lily

Lily,

>don't leave me alone here, andrew. two days is too long. write me. tell me  
>your deepest secrets. let's be in love, okay?

My deepest secrets, oh? I think we already *'are'* in love, and that's what's kept me away for two days, that we're in love, despite everything that could possibly have gone awry, considering the very nature of how we're

communicating -- in English, on email, from miles and miles away. I often wonder if it's your words I love the most or the image of you I've created in my mind. And let's be honest; you've admitted to images much the same as I. My image of you is strikingly beautiful, but how honest is that? Am I really skirting your true self by attaching a visual label to your words, objectifying you despite the impossibility of such an act occurring here? It doesn't make sense that I should love you, and there it is...

When people fall in love in Real Life, I've observed, it is *'always'* a combination of personality, interest, resonance, and, sad to say, how a person looks. They say beauty is only skin deep, etc. etc., but -- physical attraction between people seems to be a necessary component! And it seems to make the most sense philosophically as well, that you would fall in love with a person's totality, that you would fall in love *'holistically'* -- not just with what they say, and not just with how they look, but with the entire person! Isn't that what love is all about? And I don't know what you look like, and you don't know what I look like, and here we are, crafting images of each other, images that may very well collapse and crumble when we do finally see each other... and I can't have that happen.

Which is why I have a confession to make. My deepest secret, Lily, is something I'm afraid may very well tear us apart.

I'm not really a man named Andrew, Lily. I'm a woman named Susanne. I've been using a male ID in cyberspace for years, and I had no way to confess to you ... until now. And...

I still love you.

Awaiting your reply,

Susanne

\*\*\*

From: Lily

To: Susanne

>I'm not really a man named Andrew, Lily. I'm a woman named Susanne. I've been

everything you've said *'sounds'* like you. that is to say, you sound the same. you don't sound like someone has, say, broken into your account and tried to forge some nasty joke of a message to me. you still sound the same. *'you still sound the same.'*

tell me that you mean what you say, i mean, tell me again, tell me in as many different varieties as you can; i'll know, i will *'know'* if you're still you, i need to hear it one more time -- this isn't doubt, i promise, you wanted me to be careful, remember? and i think you can understand that... Jesus, andrew, i have to call you *'susanne'* now! so please don't be upset if i ask for confirmation, if i ask for you to *'tell me again'* that you *'are'* who you *'say'*. you are, regardless of the name, regardless of the label, tell me tell me now before i go crazy

and tell me that you love me?

Lily

\*\*\*

From: Susanne

To: Lily

Lily,

I will tell you in as many ways as you need. I will tell you today, I will tell you tomorrow, I will tell you every day for the rest of our lives. And we *'will'* be together for the rest of our lives, I promise, if... if you can accept who I *'am'*, which is to say, what I look like. I look like what I say, I do. My words and I bear a striking resemblance to each other. And my words and I seem to be in love with you. I can't deny it anymore. I'll find a way to send you a picture, if you really need one; however, I agree, technology... hell, society in general can help us transcend all that. We can be the first to demonstrate to the world that the way we look is not not not as important as how we *'feel'*. For God's sake, Lily, you have so much right to hate me now and you've given me a chance, you've given *'us'* a chance, and don't think I won't forget that or treat this we with as much reverence as it deserves. I will always be Here for you, Lily. Always.

when we first entered our correspondence, I had been using a male ID for almost two years. At first, before we became we, I needed to maintain that male ID; for some reason, I just couldn't face the Internet as a woman. Issues of gender objectification on the Net were thoroughly frightening to me. And then... once we got closer and closer, I began to realize the dangerous trap I'd set for myself, and there was no way out, we seemed to spiral closer and closer and I seemed to be burying myself deeper and deeper... can you imagine the horror? Of knowing that eventually I would have to tell you my deepest secrets, and that you might very well reject me forever because of my inadvertent deception?

But. Here we are. I know I'll pass your test, I know you'll recognize me, feel me within these words, and that's why I'm so attracted to you, that's the compelling feature of our relationship that makes us so vital to each other. I love you, Lily.

Anxiously awaiting your reply,  
Suzanne

\*\*\*

From: Lily

To: Suzanne

My heart literally wants to burst right out of my chest! Suzanne, dear heart, soul mate, companion forever, listen to what I have to say:

\*of course\* you passed my test, \*of course\* I know you, feel you, see you, can almost \*touch\* you, and -- there's something else, something that demonstrates so powerfully the resonance between us that I can hardly stop shaking as I type this. you see, I too have been keeping a little secret since I first experienced the internet...

I'm not really a woman named Lily! I'm a man named Paul!

Of course we still have to deal with issues of gender objectification, as you have so notably pointed out; it was indeed a shock for my images of you to have suddenly change sex, but... hey, I'm human, that means I'm \*adaptable\*, right?

I want to come see you... right this instant!

Paul

\*\*\*

From: Suzanne

To: Paul

Paul,

Your words have shaken me to my core. To think that you could take such betrayal and find the beauty in my intentions nonetheless... Do you understand what this means? Do you understand, Paul, how powerful our connection is? And nothing will ever be able to sever our connection, I can see that now, I can see how synchronistic, how immense, how wonderful and exalted our coming together really is! We need to tell each other \*everything\*, we need to convert as much of ourselves as possible into a-text, we need to devour each other online, and \*then\* and only then can we find a way to come together physically. You have given me more Hope than I ever thought possible, and that is why... I mustn't stop now. I have another secret, even deeper...

> suddenly change sex, but... hey, I'm human, that means I'm \*adaptable\*, right?

You say you're adaptable because you're human. I wish, Paul, I shared that attribute.

Not the "adaptable" part. The "human" part.

Is this going to be a problem?

Nghs4rt6hg1345+937ffe (the clearest translation of my name into your simple human language)

\*\*\*

To: Nghs4rt6hg1345+937ffe

From: Paul

well, I'm not sure if this is going to be a problem. okay, so it's a \*lot\* harder to get a visual image of you now, but I still have one question. you say very well be an alien, but... are you a male or a female alien?

I'm not trying to objectify you, I just, uh...

\*\*\*

To: Paul

From: Nghs4rt6hg1345+937ffe

Actually, I'm a male alien. "Suzanne" was just a joke.

To: Nghs4rt6hg1345+937ffe

From: swooshilerifix+423--290dkghh210081+\*

I say as well come clean -- I'M AN ALIEN TOO! and a female alien to boot! can you fucking believe the luck? I was afraid you might turn out to be one of those damned androgynes from dimension twelve, but it looks like everything turned out all right. listen, as soon as we take over this dump of a planet, let's get together at my place. I've got some excellent pornography from dimension seventeen and some lingerie from dimension twenty-three that will knock your klrdedf933ed2sfeds off and make your :L230487sd992344f hum like a 23498d7f432f=)92347dk. ;) let's be in love, okay?

p.s. my current image of you is \*something else\*, let me tell you...

swooshilerifix+423--290dkghh210081+\*

# daemon obstacles the female UNIX

Rebecca Cannon, lilith@bga.com

I dropped out of the required advanced-degree computer science course in high school. Fear and reverence kept me away for four years in college. I wrote all my papers on my very advanced Smith and Corona type writer-word processor. Finally, in my last year in college, Sandy Stone brought Interactive Multimedia to the University of Texas. Our major assignment was to create a HyperCard stack. I had it all planned out: in two weeks I'd learn how to use a Mac by running through the *Basic Mac* tutorials, then my project would surface.

Most of the students had previous computer experience and would not be wasting their time learning the essential functions of a Mac Quadra. I hated asking fellow students (who worked at computer labs outside of class) dumb questions like how to save a file or add a sound button to a stack. Needing their assistance always shamed me into self-loathing. Fortunately, Sandy's assistant Paco X. Nathan could answer my questions without being condescending, short or impatient. After weeks of demeaning tutorials, late nights fraught with tears of embarrassment, frustration and shame, I created something worthwhile. Suddenly, I was learning about the evolution of interfaces, theatrical spaces, design and VR. What might now be considered passé was fascinating and surreal to me.

Having spent a lot of time around live music and hosting "The Ho Show" (riot grrl punk rock central) on UT student radio KTSB—which eventually led me into my own band—I decided to do my first project on Babes In Toyland.

The Babes In Toyland sequence became the demo on my pseudo-musical kiosk. You clicked on an icon of Babes In Toyland and could hear a sound bite or read some media text; each button played guitar riffs or samples, and there was a sound-bite section where you could choose from four different cuts by clicking on record-album icons and photos of B-in-T. This was my Billy Idol multimedia hype disk: it was a sloppy, weird, punk rock stack created by a complete novice.

## ACTLab II

Not only was the ACTLab full of computers, it was online too so second semester I struggled even more. I cried, broke things and smoked lots of cigarettes trying to learn MacroMind Director and UNIX; I kicked myself for not taking any computer

courses prior to my last year in college. Paco Nathan turned me on to programs like *PINE* and *ELM*, allowing me to abandon that stupid UNIX handbook. He told me about some sub-culture news-groups like LERI-L, so I lurked around and ended up reading the aftermath of a NetTrip, while thinking "Gawd, there's no way I'd respond to these rants...they don't even know who I am" and they seemed like a close-knit group of people...dark and seedy.

MacroMind was a lot more challenging than HyperCard and intimidated me into making a whole MacroMind movie on my nascent band, Sincola. With some help from my friends (Jason Levit, Kerthy Hearn, Kate Messer), I managed to accumulate live video (which was saved in QuickTime), band photos and still shots from the video, along with text from local newspapers and zines. We had no recordings out at the time, so I used a tape from a live show at a bad metal bar in Austin. I made sound bites that correlated with scrolling song lyrics—bright on the screen and blaring from the lab's stereo speakers.

This particular project, unlike my measly HyperCard stack, took up about 450Mb of space which was impossible to run from the Quadra's hard drive without removing almost all the other applications, so Sandy installed an external optical disk drive...blah, blah, blah, there were other students who needed space on the computer.

I didn't dislike anybody from those two semesters, but I often felt insecure whenever I had to ask knowledgeable PC-oriented computer boys

who knew UNIX and C++ a question. My only salvation was that I knew more about Pop Culture and local bands, books, zines and all sorts of things that weirded them out; we both shared a naïveté. I cringed from their quick, incomprehensible answers, but retorted with stories of the Cavity Club and

what it was like to play trumpet in a local pop punk band, Stretford—an activity I couldn't see them doing.

## The Real World™

During my last semester at UT, I interned in the Media Department at MCC (Micro Electronics Computer Technologies Consortium Incorporated). In the beginning, I thought I would learn a lot at MCC. They had lots of hardware stocked with graphics programs, color laser printers and video editing equipment; this was a center for research and advanced technology. And I was just a grunt-gopher. I learned that Media Departments make brochures and archival videos for communication computer technology groups, archiving seminars and conferences—all very confidential and boring.

My supervisors taught me a minuscule amount and gave me little access to nothing; instead, I was offered the opportunity to stuff envelopes, make copies and pick up special papers and color laser copies of important slides from around Austin. WOW! I drove my car around Austin for 25 cents a mile—driving the long way and cussing at myself for thinking an internship meant I'd learn something valuable. Their big comeback to that was, "If you weren't here, we would be doing this work ourselves." I faxed and mailed lots of press releases about the wonderful goings-on at MCC, which were highly proprietary and confidential and I'm not supposed to tell you about them.

One positive aspect of my interning experience was my email account. After finishing my rat

This was no Billy Idol multimedia hype disk: it was a sloppy, weird, punk rock stack created by a complete novice

duties and after the head supervisor X-dude had left for the day, I would use his computer to write to Paco—rants that told of my misery and frustration with the lack of sensory stimulation at MCC and various updates on my MacroMind movie project

## Weirdness Connects All Things Unsatisfactory

I hashed out my multimedia band project with Sandy Stone and she forwarded some of my more excited gender rants to her friend Brenda Laurel. Shortly after Brenda appeared on the cover of *Mondo 2000*, she spoke at my university, and I got to ask her lots of gender questions concerning the boy-video-game-science-math computer-connection vs. the girl-anti-video-game computer-connection. The evolution of boys' interest in *Dungeons and Dragons* and video games into computers was obvious to me, when I'd be the only girl in an arcade playing pinball. I just wasn't interested in the *Ninja Turtle* fight games. I sloppedgeeky-boys-math-science and *D&D* into one category—that was for the boys—and then English, literature and pinball was for us. What was a young woman to think at age 17 when studies would come out saying females typically score lower on the Math and Science sections of the SAT? I must have believed them, because in the end, I did suck at Math and I scored low, extremely low on the SAT section and was called "math deficient" in college. Interactive Multimedia? HyperCard stacks and QuickTime videos? Brenda Laurel and Sandy Stone? I had never done, seen or experienced anything like this before.

### Conclusion

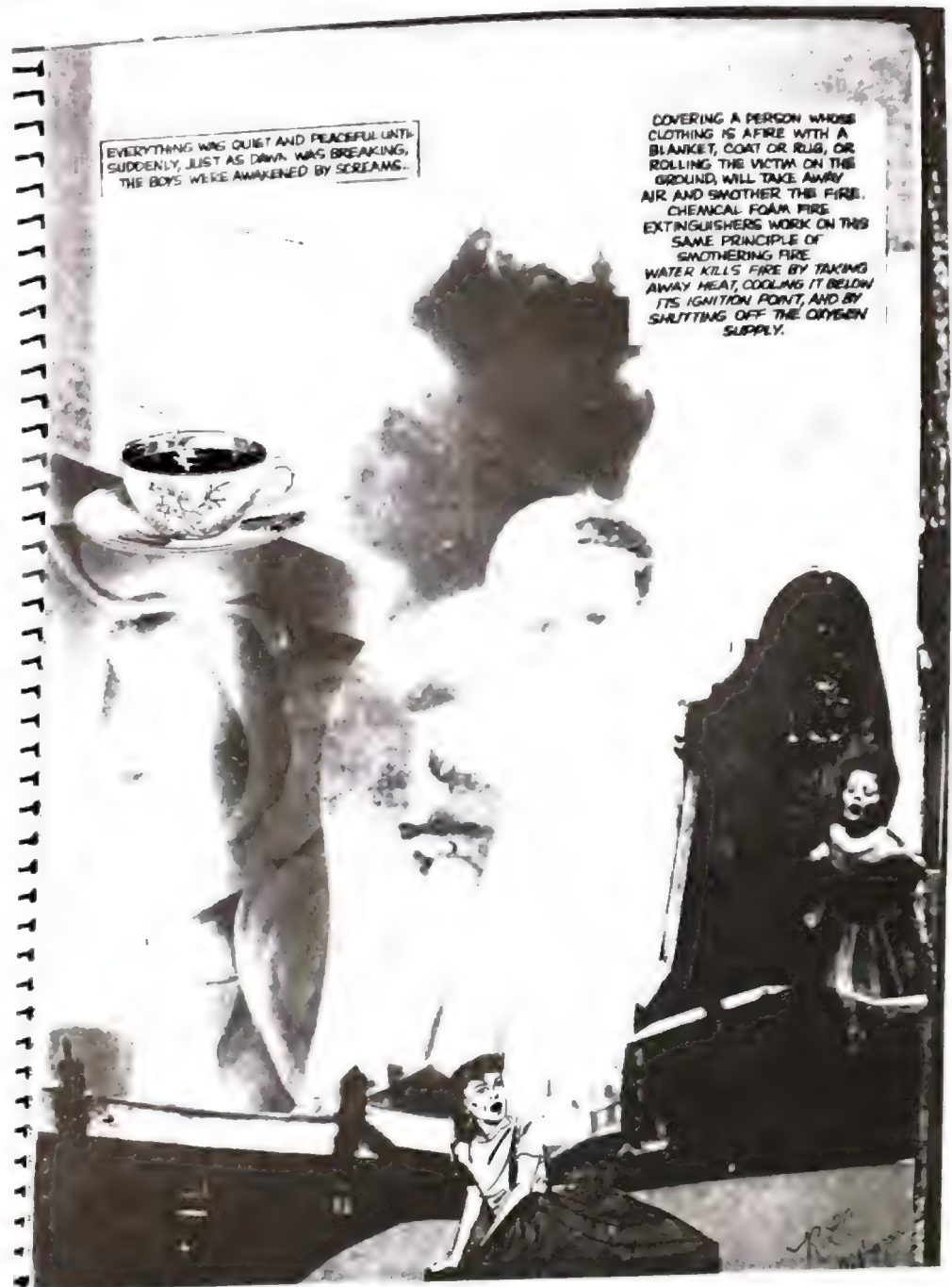
I am a creative person and that is why I assimilated. I learned by circumlocution. I did not know any languages, I had to look up all my commands, but both of the multimedia projects were visually, aurally and aesthetically stimulating. For example, once I learned about writing a HyperCard script for flashing a stack (one command: "flash 20") I went with it... so my whole stack was like a fucking strobe light. Instead of using techno-synth music for musical scores (in place of blips and bleeps) I used screaming Babes In Toyland or "Oh Bondage Up Yours" by the X-Ray Spex. My creative intuitions out-weighted my technical barriers.

In text-based multimedia user domains, you have to be creative to survive. However, I thrive on the sensual and visual more than textual domains; and my work was neurotic enough to be interesting. Because of my childlike, attention-deprived sensibilities and inability to mature gracefully, I discovered outlets and venues for my dysfunctional girl-child-woman. My definition of creativity is the ability to be a child; the ability to express limitations and visions which evoke extreme responses. When I interviewed Babes In Toyland for KTSB, I told them about my interactive multimedia project that featured them in the demo sequence and asked

their advice to other women who wanted to be in a band; Kat said, "Just stop talking about it and do it."

It all circles around, dot-to-dot, enriching my life with child-like obsessions. Why bother with computers if you can't have fun? I used anger and frustration to embrace what I feared and made something of relevance to me. Taking risks, being immature, making lots of mistakes and actively participating in untouchable domains I once worshipped from afar, subsequently created empowering results.

My experiences doing Interactive Multimedia with Sandy Stone and Paco Nathan, along with my actual performance experience—brought out latent personas which now dominate and dictate my life more than yesterday's deceased fearful, insecure obstacle demons ever did. ♪



# erikarant

## chix-in-dix

My main task everyday is to **change** the world. I approach this as if I were a **cocktail napkin** at a nuclear spew, but **at least I try**. Things are all fucked up, everywhere; the **enormity** of the fucked-upness and the realization that **the People In Charge** are too busy trying to kick **the pins out** from under each other to even **comprehend** the dire and globalized fucked-upness **makes me feel** okay about being a cocktail napkin in all this **toxic** water.

It seems that in **certain arenas** where brains count more **than brawn**, **men feel** more resentful



toward **women**. Technology is one of those arenas that's **why we** gals out here on the info-frontier have to **put up** with the type of crude or pompous **male behavior** we were hoping to get away from, that's **why** we keep seeing the same worn, torn, **threadbare**-as-an-old-pair-of-Jockey-shorts images of women on CD ROM games. It seems that men-men-ubiquitous-and-all-powerful men are

permanently attached to the **BREAST**, making a brief evolutionary leap into arrested adolescence, where they remain, frozen like sperm samples. I have to get this out before I spontaneously combust: **I AM SICK SICK SICK OF TITS-N-ASS!**

For those of you without breasts, it's probably asking a lot for you to understand why tits-n-ass is so repugnant. Think about this: why do the male-dominated media industries rarely (if ever) grace a movie with male frontal nudity? Why isn't there an endless stream of male "personal hygiene" ads on TV—"Johnson & Johnson's **NEW** dick douche with a manly scent..." Why has the word "penis" only recently been allowed utterance on broadcast television? Why isn't there a Lorena Bobbitt CD ROM edutainment disk?

Take a moment here to think about your own dick, if you have one. Think about the feelings you would have seeing this ad for a car: a manly-man in tight revealing Spandex underwear, bends backward over the hood of his new Ferrari Testosterone; shirt draped noticeably over the open driver's door; voice-over says, "You're a Real Man...you've done it all...bought and sold Wall Street...made your mark...isn't it time you got what you deserved? *Ferrari Testosterone*...the reward you deserve..."; camera pulls away, you see the man, arching backwards, backlit by sun setting over ocean horizon. Is the bulge in his swim-trunks prominent? Well, if it is, that could make you feel...small, or impotent, i.e., not feel-

ing very good about the Testosterone, by annexation. Is it a subdued **bulge**? In that case, why would you want a car that some limp dude drives? And in either case, the mere fact that you are responding **IN ANY WAY** to a man's penis means you must be **GAY**. Hence, let's just leave penii out of the whole image.

On the other hand, boobs are benign: "boobs" & "tits" are friendly and inoffensive (to men) little words. Even though they're reminiscent of Mom as well as sex-toy-kittens, we've sufficiently downplayed that connection in our culture so that the whole Electra business is effectively inoperative on a conscious level. Boobs are comfy, sexy, fun—unthreatening on every level. Even if you are a wimpy kinda gy, you can at least look at boobs and feel superior to the model, who is being degraded and humiliated by having her anatomy exposed for the purpose of selling cars. The car is equated with fun sexy boobs, that are there, as is the car, for your gratification.

Why don't we see any male frontal nudity in the movies? Because in whatever shape, position, activity it's presented, a significant portion of the viewing public—i.e., men, i.e., people with money and power—will be sufficiently affected or disaffected by it to not see it at all. Studios don't like to take risks, and they hate to even *think* about losing money.

The presentation of a penis in any media brings up aspects of our society that no one is prepared to deal with. The number one problem is homo-



erotic response. In a nation of Ollie-North-worshipping fag-beating frozen-in-adolescence males, an erotic response to the image of a penis is an intolerable contemplation. My own theory—coalesced from other theories and outright guesswork—is that men, being sexually responsive to visual stimuli in general, do not discriminate between hetero- or homosexual imagery, they simply get aroused, and their arousal is not within

that! Gotta keep the American Penis Totem rigid as the Sears Tower!

When is this going to change? Probably not in my lifetime, unless something drastic happens—like if men were all crushed by a speeding glacier and we women were left to reinvent media. Even if women, somehow or other, were suddenly in charge of creating a new cultural iconography, I am sure it wouldn't be a turning-the-tables kind of

boys that I would like to thank for letting me find out for myself if I could "ride anything with hair on it", and a gy named Rod, who gave me a job in his auto repair shop when I was so ignorant I didn't know that the air-nozzle wasn't really "the brake cleaning tool".

This whole harangue isn't about tits-n-ass and Men: Hate 'Em/Love 'Em, it's about evolution and changing the world. If the world were so damn

"See, you're just a piece of meat, as innocuous and replaceable as a spokesmodel and her boobs."

their control anymore than sneezing is. However, ACTING on the arousal is. But many of Today's Men seem to have forgotten that distinction.

The other thing that happens when men are exposed to images of penises in the same context they're used to seeing boobs and female buttocks portrayed, is that the penis (and therefore the man himself) is reduced in importance, just the way women have been systematically diminished over the years by the media. To behold the penis as just another sales tool (ha), as something other than the holy conduit of sperm, the papal sceptre, the Washington Monument, the Apollo moon rocket, Pikes Peak, and John Wayne's rifle, is to say to the world and to men everywhere, "See, you're just a piece of meat, as innocuous and replaceable as a spokesmodel and her boobs." Can't have

thing: women don't have that same indefatigable fascination with dicks that men have with breasts—some women even consider a dick the most feckless of appendages. Women have been so removed from media creation for so long that I cannot even visualize what *The New York Times* might be like, or even *Ms. Magazine*, if such a radical paradigm shift should come about

I don't hate men—really. To be quite frank, my life would be dull and unidimensional without them. It was the presence of a few incredible men in my world that gave me a sense of my own strength and presence. I could write an ode to my father, who taught me to love language and words and yelling; I could sing for my gay uncle who gave me my fashion sense and taught me all I know about henna; there are a few old dead cow-

fabulous there wouldn't be so many of us scratching ASCII to get into cyberspace. I believe we come here for the same reason artists make art and writers write: to communicate, to better understand ourselves and others, to grow.

So let's evolve.

Ask for what you want and need; if asked, give generously of whatever resources you have. Rip the head off a Barbie doll. Break-down your own brain.

Evolution begins at home. 1/6



*I had no use for dolls  
I used to be a horse, running  
through the pastures of my Mississippi childhood  
running free, big and strong,  
and everyone could see how beautiful and bold I was  
and they would love me  
for that.*

### It's a wild ride

getting away

from having to sit with your knees together

like a little lady

being shut into the house

like grown-up women are,

### It's a wild ride

romping free across fields

over fences and ditches

away from everybody.



I led my fourth grade school mates around the playground where we played at being a herd of horses. There were five of us and we would run all over a n d y e a r i t w a s t h e f r e e d o m , t h e r u n n i n g , s o m e t i m e s w e a p p r o a c h e d t h e ( c o w ) b o y s b u t s e l d o m , b e c a u s e w e k n e w t h e y o n l y w a n t e d t o t a m e u s . ( T h e E x p e r t s s t o o p a n d t a k e u p n o t h i n g t h e y s a y i t ' s a l l a b o u t s e x . A h o r s e i s a p e n i s . A h o r s e i s a f a t h e r - h u s b a n d . A h o r s e i s t h e b a b y e v e r y g i r l d r e a m s o f h a v i n g . I t ' s T h e E x p e r t s w h o w a n t a b i g h o m e c o c k z i p p e d i n t o t h e i r o w n p a n t s , w h o w a n t t o m a r r y t h e i r d a u g h t e r s a n d t h e c h i l d o f t h e i r o w n ( s e e d . )

Horses were not just something I wanted to be, they were something I wanted to be like. We are so alike, girl and horse: stronger than we are allowed to know, yielding our strength to others as if it were our fare for getting somewhere.

—Erika Whiteway, [outrider@well.com](mailto:outrider@well.com)



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That's right, if you mailed  
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quite possible that space  
aliens ate your address,  
then tried to make it look  
as if our computer had died.  
We know better, but still  
need to know if you sent  
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update our munched data-  
base--so that We will know  
that They know that You  
know...thanx!

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# how to pickup chicks on the net

Erika Whiteway, [outrider@well.com](mailto:outrider@well.com)  
Tiffany Lee Brown, [magdalen@well.com](mailto:magdalen@well.com)

How to approach a Female on the Net: top-ten pickup techniques for Cybersluts

## #1

If a person's login name leads you to believe that she might have a twat, by all means send (instantaneously, if possible) a query about their sexual identity. If your online personality is a Subtle One, try "Hey, are you a girl?" or the ever-popular "Hi. What do you look like?" ("How old are you?" may be used as a backup.) If your online personality is of the Cyber-Swagger persuasion, try "Wanna have a private chat?" or "I've got twelve inches of cyberlove cornin' your way."

## #2

Should the newcomer prove to be female indeed, make certain you bombard her with "instant memos" or "private realtime messages" at a constant rate of thirty-four/minute.

## #3

Crash her emailbox with the complete history of your life, from birth to the present, liberally sprinkled with the following helpful expressions: :-), "...(grin)"; :-), "...(smile)". A resume, with letters of recommendation, scanned copies of your birth certificate and college degree, marital status (only if single), and vital stats are essential. Padding is *de rigueur*.

## #4

Spy on her. Do the "finger" exercise the entire time you're online. If you catch her having a private chat with another male, increase your instant messages to one/second. Blast her into accepting you as her one true online lover. "I am a very jealous man...or so I've been told."

## #5

Your Cover Letter: remember, you can't brag too much, especially if you ascribe these superlatives to other people. Examples: "My last girlfriend (she had to move to Paris for her modelling career) always said I was the best lover she ever had." Or this example, taken from an actual email pickup attempt: "Personally...rather handsome and cute I'm told...very bright, sensitive, worldly, progressive... A few years ago included in a book about available gys published by Playgirl Press with the title *The American Bachelors register: An Intimate Look At America's 100 Most Eligible Bachelors* [note: photo with clothes on! :-)]."

## #6

Tell her you are a journalist researching an article for a prestigious magazine, "But I'm afraid I can't reveal the name of the publication just yet. I've admired your witty and intelligent contributions to \_\_\_\_\_ (the teledildonics thread in alt.sex.bondage/the Women in Business forum/the Great Books Salon chat room/the Don Henley email list)." Tell her, "I would really like to quote you in my story—it's about online semiotics—maybe we could meet for a latte?"

## #7

If she matches her Bozo Filter or otherwise ignores you, email her copiously. Try to jam her box with enough mail that she will incur retro-spatial data-storage charges if she fails to log in every day in her effort to avoid you.

## #8

Religiously follow her postings on public conferences and leave cute ;-)) little responses. Email in-depth essays about her brilliant and insightful postings (send nightly, if not twice per day). Publicly praise her as well, and refer to her in your responses as if you two are on really intimate terms. If possible, force her to humiliate you publicly—negative attention is better than no attention at all!

## #9

You're a real cyberstud, aren't you? Prove your hacking skills, brethren, and pry into her private files to the best of your ability. Crack her password if at all possible. In subsequent readings, be sure to mention private information gleaned from your espionage—she'll be impressed!!! :-)

## #10

If all else fails, and she continues to bypass your brilliant email, rip her to shreds in public. Don't neglect to let your virtual friends know that she is one of the following: a "dyke", a "slut", "virtually frigid", or, better yet, that she's really a 14-year-old boy in Toronto. Send hate-mail—women love to take abuse from men, after all. W





**Day Dreamer**  
*..by Alpha Odysseys*  
**\$14.95 + \$2.00 ship**  
**GROK-01**

Made from purple plastic, this device vaguely resembles a diving mask perfect for your next dive into the Neuroverse! You look toward the nearest star with eyes closed, then blow into a tube with long, deep breaths, which causes the device's inner disk to rotate. Strobed natural light on closed eyelids produces photic stimulation, which combines with paced breathing for a wonderfully vivid kaleidoscopic experience. Simply the most intense brain machine available for cost performance if you have sunlight & breath to invest in clearing mental cobwebs. Called "the LSD flight simulator" by Timothy Leary.



**ESPRIT**

**Esprit ESP-1**  
*..by Syntec Systems*  
**\$129.00 + \$3.00 ship**  
**GROK-02**

Pocket-sized brain machine, which FWR uses for events. Six built-in programs range from 10-30 min. in Alpha, Theta & Beta states. Powered by 4 AA batteries. Great buy in terms of price performance & durability.



**MasterMind DLS**  
*..by Syntec Systems*  
**\$199.00 + \$3.00 ship**  
**GROK-03**

Very popular mid-range, pocket-sized brain machine with more extensive controls beyond the Esprit. External audio input, built-in NiCad batteries & recharger.

**MasterMind DLS w/ PolySync**  
*..by Syntec Systems*  
**\$249.00, ship incl.**  
**GROK-04**

Same as MasterMind DLS but can also download programs from cassettes & CDs.



**SYNERGIZER**

**Synergizer**  
*..by Syntec Systems*  
**\$475.00, ship incl.**  
**GROK-05**

Add-in card + s/w for PCs. Great graphical interface for designing brain machine sessions up to 10 hrs or 300 segments long. Where all brain-machines are headed. Why buy extra boxes when you can use your PC as a custom brain machine?



**Mind Mirror**  
*..by KnowWare*  
**\$19.95 + \$1.00 ship**  
**GROK-06**

ThoughtWare for Mind tool or Mind-play" from Timothy Leary. For use with you personal "thought processing appliance." DOS color psych self analysis. 5.25in disk manual autographed by Dr. Leary (9Jan94).



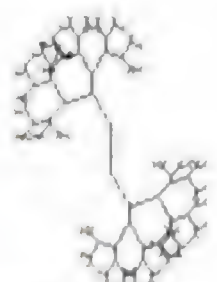
**IBVA, 2 Channel Upgrade**  
*..by Psychic Lab Inc.*  
**\$115.00, ship incl.**  
**GROK-09**

Upgrade kit to allow for two IBVA systems to be used in tandem. Tag team EEG play with a grokburdly, or use two head bands to analyze left right brain EEG simultaneously.



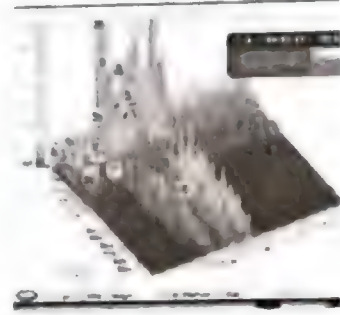
**Digital Psychic**  
*..by Jeff Posey*  
**\$14.95 + \$0.75 ship**  
**GROK-07**

DOS s/w for digital searches. "Requires VGA graphics, mouse & a relaxed state of mind." Stonehenge pix for your visualpsychic pleasure. If you've ever used a Ouija board then you know what to do.



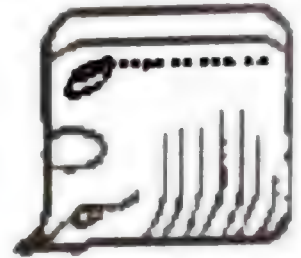
**Blind Watchmaker**  
*..by Richard Dawkins*  
**\$10.95 + \$1.00 ship**  
**BORG-02**

Evolutionary "biomorph" s/w for DOS or Mac based on the Dawkins book. We use these Alife wares to illustrate our zines, a nifty, low-cost intro package that animates lessons about modern evolutionary theory.



**IBVA 1.5**  
*..by Psychic Lab Inc.*  
**\$1295.00, ship incl.**  
**GROK-08**

Interactive Brainwave Analyzer system. A sensor head band radio-xmits signals to a state of the art EEG system for the Mac. 3D FFT s/w provides visual analysis in real-time & translates brain modalities into MIDI events, graphic animation, RS-422 control signals, etc. for brain wave controlled multimedia & VR. See review in *Mundo 2000* #7.



**Mayan Calendar**  
*..by Dolphin Software*  
**\$49.00 + \$3.00 ship**  
**BORG-03**

Academic tour-de-force explores correlations in Mayan & Western calendaric dates. Allows for various hypotheses about the Mayan calendar (e.g. 12.18.19.9.6 in the Tikal system using correlation number 584,283 is also called 13 Cimi 9 Yax, which PC anthropologists might call 13oct92 & agreed by most modern astronomers to be Julian day number 2,448,909). Provides an interesting way to encode a sequence of numbers which one might care to protect.



**PowerGlove**  
..by **Mattel**  
bid/ask available units  
**GZMO-01**

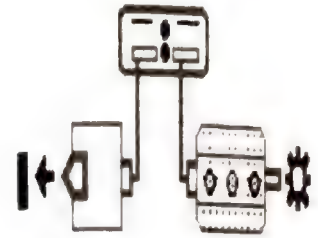
Mattel's ultra low-end VR device for 3D input to your computer. Limited used models—subject to availability. As we get units in, we ask people on our list.

**FRED13**  
..by **Robitron Software**  
**\$199.95 + \$3.00 ship**  
**GZMO-08**

Natural language one-liner dialog generator AI. Used for the FRED13 topic of the "mondo" conference on *The WELL*. DOS or Unix. Check about source license.

**FRED13 demo**  
..by **Robitron Software**  
**\$43.00 + \$2.00 ship**  
**GZMO-09**

Same as above but doesn't learn new phrases; has 12000 phrase/response records, enough to hold a loose conversation. Great for an "intelligent agent" on a BBS



**Hyperbot Interface Kit**  
..by **Bots**  
**\$290.00 + \$4.00 ship**  
**GZMO-11**

"Flexible robotic control, Hypercard tools for education." Mac-based graphical controller to build robots out of popular toy building kits *LEGO*, *Capsella*, *MOVIT*, *isher-technik*. Other activity kits available. Very easy to learn & program



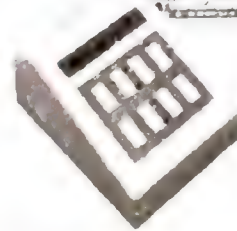
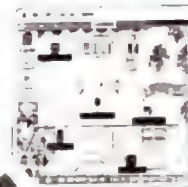
**Timewave Zero**  
..by **Dolphin Software**  
**\$49.00 + \$3.00 ship**  
**BORG-04**

Hexagram #49: "The magician is the one who make the calendar." High time for an archaic revival. DOS s/w illustrates Terence McKenna's theoretical work on Novelty, Time & the End of History (i.e. *Singularity*). A precision instrument for exploring the theory of time as a fractal wave derived from the King Wen Sequence of *I Ching* Hexagrams. Based on extraterrestrial communications.



**Polar Bear Snuff**  
..by **Devanshire Apothecary**  
**\$7.00 + \$0.75 ship**  
**CHEM-03**

A very popular bit of herbal snuff to help wake you up for a long night of driving, writing, hacking or whatever. "This shameless little concoction has always been our most popular herbal toy." White powder, 2.5g, contains: caffeine crystals, red ginseng, kava kava, menthol crystals, clove & wintergreen oils.



**X-10 CPU Interface**  
..by **X-10 Home Controls Inc.**  
**\$65.00, ship incl.**  
**GZMO-10**

Controls lighting, appliances, security, etc. by sending signals over existing house wiring &/or infrared & radio transceivers. Model CP290 connects to the serial port of a Mac or PC. Bundled s/w can pre-set up to 128 timed events on up to 256 modules using multiple schedule files, then the unit disconnects from the computer. Mac version uses PICTs & icons to represent maps of your home. Connecting cable included. Dozens of X-10 peripherals are available, ranging from motion detectors to telephone transponders which dial multiple numbers in your voice... check our online price-list for details.



## MENSTAT

**Menstat 2.0**  
..by **Sudona**  
**\$99.00 + \$3.00 ship**  
**BORG-05**

Fertility planning s/w for Macintosh which uses neural nets to adapt to an individual's patterns. Easy to use graphical interface, lunar calendar, herbalism hypertext database & extended documentation as a health text. Check Susie Bright's review in *Future Sex* #2



**Xochi Speaks**  
..by **Lord Nose!**  
**\$24.00 + \$1.00 ship**  
**CHEM-02**

Full-color poster of *Xochipilli*, Aztec god of Flowers with 16pp "Guide to the Psychedelics". *Mondo 2000* #7 sez: "Very neatly & artistically fills an educational niche." Taxonomy, cross tolerance, nutritional support, etc., partly excerpted within the public domain *Xochi Stack* for Hypercard.



**Circuit Board Clipboard**  
..by **tecnotes**  
**\$11.00 + \$2.00 ship**  
**GZMO-03**

33 x 24cm clipboard made from recycled circuit boards. Colors & designs vary with sources

**Circuit Board Binder**  
..by **tecnotes**  
**\$12.00 + \$2.00 ship**  
**GZMO-04**

Three-ring binder, 30 x 24cm, with steel polyhinge. Made from recycled circuit boards. Colors & designs vary



**Machine Screws**  
 ..by FringeWare Inc.  
**\$1.95 per sheet + \$0.30 ship**  
**MEME-06**

Stickers with a machine screw logo, approx. 5cm square. Just about the same size as those ubiquitous "heart" stickers. You know what to do.



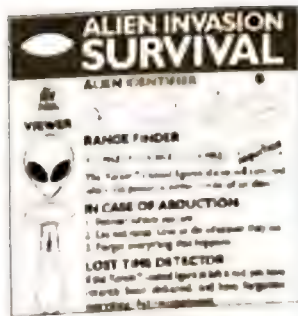
**World's Greatest Computer Disk Stickers**  
 ..by Block Eye Designs  
**\$2.95 + \$0.50 ship**  
**MEME-08**

That's right, these are really great. Each packet has 12 diskette labels, each with color artwork, intoburbs & plenty of space left over for labeling your bytes. Five collections available: SciFi, Circus, Mystery, Smiles, Dinosaurs. Specify style with order.



**Complete Schwa Kit**  
 ..by Schwa  
**\$15.00 + \$1.00 ship**  
**MEME-10**

"All the basic equipment for alien defense in one simple kit!" A brilliantly terrifying tale of alien abduction, told in a book that contains only symbols & illustrations. Kit also includes alien invasion survival keychain, cards, stickers, etc. F5 sez "Whitney Schrieber alien rapture conspiracy virus attack! Suicide=redemption=money." A perfect intro text for surveying the stealth landscape of paranoia, alienation & disappearance. Stay Awake!

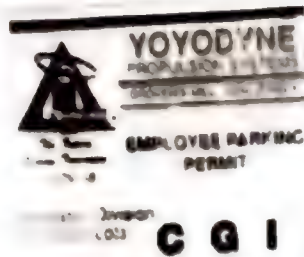


**Alien Invasion Survival Card**  
 ..by Schwa  
**\$1.00 + \$0.30 ship**  
**MEME-11**

"Identify aliens instantly with the amazing Xenon coated identifier" on a keychain. Includes lost time detector, abduction rangefinder, abduction rules, saucer viewer, and special peephole so that you can see what happens when they don't think you are watching.

**Every Picture Tells A Lie**  
 ..by Schwa  
**\$1.00 + \$0.30 ship**  
**MEME-12**

Alien head sticker (5cm diam) with "Every Picture Tells A Lie" motto. Help shape the future!



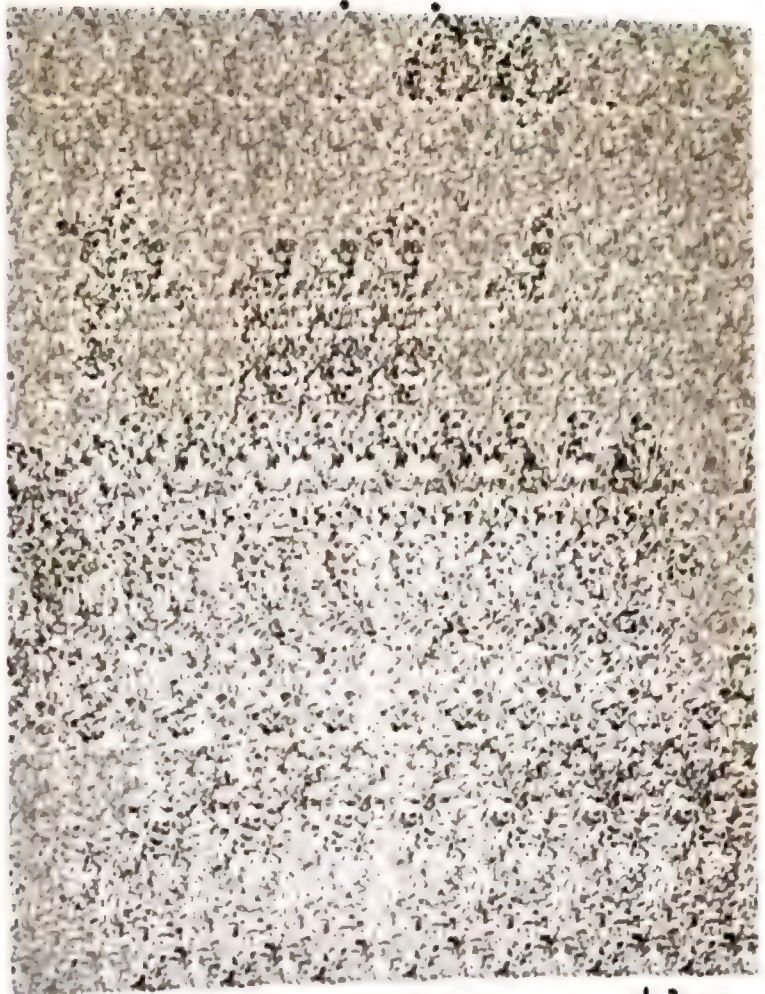
**Yoyodyne Parking Permit**  
 ..by Pegasus Publishing  
**\$1.50 + \$0.30 ship**  
**MEME-15**

Now you can safely park your vehicle in any of the eight dimensional slots. Transparent decal, 8 x 10cm.



**Schwa Lunar Calendar**  
 ..by Schwa  
**\$5.00 + \$0.75 ship**  
**MEME-17**

'94 lunar calendar, 1 x 0.5m. "Keeps you informed of all important lunar events." Great illos—terribly subtle.



cross your eyes on the  
 two dots, or put it be-  
 hind glass





**2600 tee**  
..by 2600 magazine  
\$12.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-01

White illo of the original Blue Box circuit diagram on black cotton cloth. Caption: "This is what started it all."



**Kata Sutra tee**  
..by bOING-bOING magazine  
\$12.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-02

Kata Sutra logo with mind-bomb. Glow-in-the-dark on black cotton. Join the neo-wobblers in their great neuronautical adventures against G.I.C. "Get Illuminated!"



**DIS NET tee**  
..by Dissemination Network  
\$12.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-03

Indian-head test pattern from Texas premier Tek-know™ muse/vid artists. Glow-in-the-dark on black cotton. Designs may mutate over time.



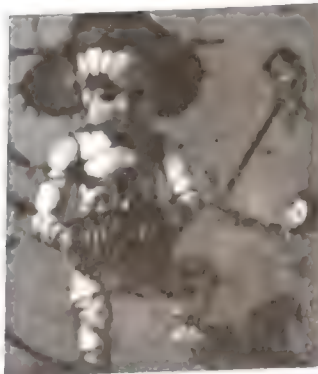
**Legion Of Doom tee**  
..by Phrack ezine  
\$15.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-07

Famed LOD "Internet World Tour" shirt returns, with "Hacking For Jesus '91" on back. Black on white cotton.



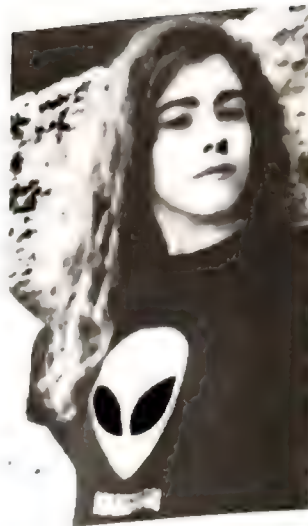
**GLOD tee**  
..by GLOD  
\$15.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-07

"PIECE, Detroit-style." Black on white cotton. Watch for their recordings in here. GOD + GOLD = GLOD.



**Bondage Baby Dangles**  
**Bondage Pigs**  
**Bondage Hand Dangles**  
**Wicked Hand Dangles**  
..by BobéLink  
\$15.00 each + \$1.00 ship  
WEAR-04

Earring designs by performance artist Rene J. Cigler. "Her sculptures... do have definite characteristics of that morbid, necrophile, apocalyptic style which we know from Cigler... reminiscent of Mad Max, postnuclear science fiction or cyberpunk" sez *bOING-bOING* magazine. Featured by *FAD Mondo 2000*, MTV & the cover of *bOING-bOING* #11. Many more designs available, including body armor, neck pieces & other wire-rubber gizmo jewelry.



**Schwa tee**  
..by Schwa  
\$14.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-04

Alien detector logo is xenon-coated so that it'll glow in the presence of aliens. Great early warning system in case of abduction. White on black cotton, plus glow in the dark. "Not for the squeamish."



**'92 Republican Convention tee**  
..by Pescado Production  
\$15.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-05

Ever notice how cops enjoy rubbing their nightsticks? Here's proof from the ACT-UP rally in Houston at the '92 Convention. Black on white.



**FWR tee**  
..by FringeWare Inc.  
\$10.00 + \$3.00 ship  
SKIN-06

FWR logo a-la media detournment, plus illo for "Applied Memetics" from *FWR* #2. Designed by Monte McCarter. Let 'em know you care!



**Warewear Earrings**  
**Warewear Brooches**  
**Warewear Tie Tacks**  
..by Patty's Stuff  
\$5.00 each + \$0.50 ship  
WEAR-02

'Puter chips recycled into jewelry. Earrings come in three designs: dangling on hooks, piercing on posts & "puncture" (pierce with chip leads cut to look like a chip implant). Custom designs available on request, ask for contact info.



**Voltar Masks**  
..by Duran  
\$25.00 + \$3.00 ship  
WEAR-03

In the tense battles to protect Voltar one of the last remaining M class planets of a nearby star system, our superhero Duran has produced a new kind of electronically enhanced masks to protect his agents. Crafted from recycled electronic scraps, blinking LED circuits, see-thru plastic mesh, sunglasses & velcro, these masks might help the wearer to perceive beyond the media mindwash. Besides, they're fun at parties. Takes 4 watch batteries.

All  
T-  
Shirts  
are  
size  
XL  
only





**Cultures: From the Annotated Self**  
 ..by BASE.ARTS  
 \$15.00 + \$0.75 ship  
 MELT-08

First in a series of solo digital exhibitions featuring Sammy Cucher previously shown at Ars Electronica, AROMA, etc. "Digital images...inquiring into the relationship between art & science" akin to automatic writing." Specify Mac or PC.



The dimly lit street-lit parking garage—some kid has left in the past hours. Now alone, pedestrian, she stands, hunched over his beam. It could only get worse since the fetus started peeing.

**Ambulance**  
 ..by Electronic Hollywood  
 \$15.00 + \$0.75 ship  
 MELT-01

Sound-tracked horror novel of five LA post-collegiate twenty-something posers. "Upon John's release from rehab they crash their car in a deserted stretch of Hollywood Hills & get picked up by a serial killer masquerading as an ambulance driver." Non-linear story by Monica Moran lets you chose doors, windows to alter the plot. Hypertext links for plot clues, animation by Jaime Levy, artwork by Jaime Hernandez of Love & Rockets, soundtrack by Mike Watt. Requires Mac w/ 6.0.7 or later, 2Mb RAM, shipped on HD floppy.



**Flashbacks**  
 ..by KnowWare  
 \$12.00 + \$1.00 ship  
 MELT-04

"A Personal & Social History of an Era." Online version of Timothy Leary's autobiography, with forward by William S. Burroughs. "Part man, part myth, part knight, part dragon."



**Cyber Rag I**  
**Cyber Rag II**  
**Cyber Rag III**  
**Electronic Hollywood I**  
**Electronic Hollywood II**  
 ..by Electronic Hollywood  
 \$6.00 each + \$0.75 ship  
 MELT-02

Mac electronic publications from premiere electronic zinester Jaime Levy. Mondo 2000 #7: "Angst animations, premenstrual poetry, ram-bunctious reviews, seductive sound samples" as well as subversive into for all. Started as a student project that frankly just took over. Electronic muchomedia with cutting insight, captivating production & a severe attitude! Each issue editorializes the frustrations of big city life from a Post-Boomer POV, as La Editrix wanders from NYC to SF to LA to NYC...



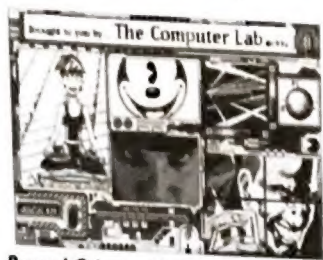
**Expanded Books:**  
**Neuromancer, Count Zero, Mona Lisa Overdrive**  
**Complete Annotated Alice**  
**Complete Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**  
**Genius: Life & Science of R. Feynman**  
**Jurassic Park (w/ sounds)**  
**Amusing Ourselves To Death, Brave New World, etc.**  
**Asimov Complete Stories, v1**  
 ..by The Voyager Company  
 \$18.00 each + \$1.00 ship  
 MELT-05

Mac s/w for electronic versions of popular novels with illustrations, sounds, hypertext links, digital book-marks & even hidden extras in the stories. Run word & phrase searches, add margin comments & end notes, highlight text, etc. "Electronic text is a dynamic medium that enables you to become a more active reader." Requires: System 6.0.7 or later w/ 31cm or larger monitor, HyperCard 2.1, HD disks.



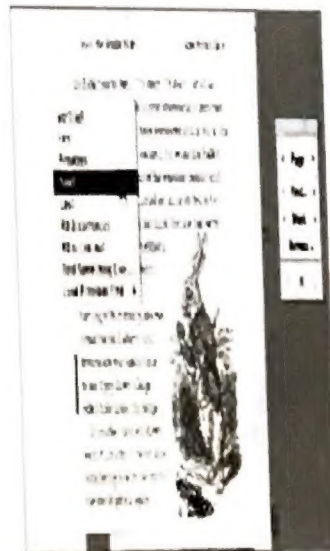
**Billy Idol's Cyberpunk**  
 ..by Electronic Hollywood  
 \$10.00 + \$0.75 ship  
 MELT-07

Mac-based hardcore exploitation of presentation media-turn-interactive-MTV. "My first sell-out s/w!" First floppy ever distributed with an album. Contributions from Mark Frauentelder, Gareth Branwyn, etc. See why everybody flamed on alt c-p!



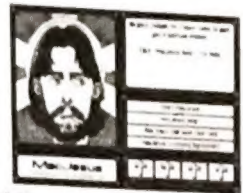
**Beyond Cyberpunk! v1.5**  
 ..by The Computer Lab  
 \$35.00 + \$2.50 ship  
 MELT-03

**Attention Citizen!** Multimedia tour-de-force of art, literature, thought & practice in a postmodern cyberpunk genre. "Like scuba diving in an Encyclopedia." Requires HyperCard 2.x: coolest stack on the planet. Peter Sugarman, Gareth Branwyn, Mark Frauentelder, Bruce Sterling, Richard Kadrey, Paul Di Filippo, Hakim Bey, Rudy Rucker & other illuminated cybodies under pseudonyms, cross linked via hypertext with industrial sound track, animation clips, digital book marks & a dictionary that pronounces its terms. "Open your eyes, ears & minds to the river of information that is growing exponentially... in raging turbulence... beyond anyone's ability to comprehend."



**Hacker**  
 ..by Steve Jackson Games  
 \$17.76 + \$3.00 ship  
 PLAY-01

The US Secret Service wanted SJG's upcoming GURPS Cyberpunk game book so badly, they violated several Fed laws just to seize it. Board game written as a satire of the SS ordeal—similar the popular *Illuminati*, but with a lot more Jolt Cola & modems. Boot up your Hackintosh & watch out for your alleged friends. Fnord.



**Macjesus**  
 ..by Smurfs In Hell  
 \$9.25 + \$0.75 ship  
 PLAY-02

"Your personal Saviour on a floppy disk." Claims to help give you "an inside track when dealing with the Creator Of The Universe." Interactive mano-a-mano with an avatar, for personal evaluation & advice. Based on Hypercard 1.2—with special thanks to Miss Fifi LaRoue for "helping write the really dirty stuff."



**Mormonoids From The Deep**  
 ..by Smurfs In Hell  
 \$9.25 + \$0.75 ship  
 PLAY-03

One of the best adventure games on the Mac, depending on tastes: you have a .45, a nuclear detonator, a rapidly waning collection of beers as lifeblood & you're stuck in a small, sociopathic Mormon town in northern Utah. What happens next?

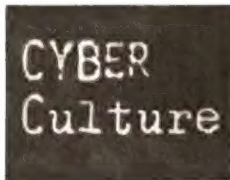
**MacSpudd!**  
 ..by Smurfs In Hell  
 \$12.25 + \$0.75 ship  
 PLAY-04

In the closing days of the 20th century, a major portion of the world's oil reserves were accidentally destroyed during a limited nuclear exchange between South Yemen & Liechtenstein. Alas, a French firm named Herpes Simplex now converts potatoes into ethanol, giving rise to the wealth & relative danger of life in Celibate Idaho. Come on, be a hero. Mac 2 disks.



**WAX**  
..by David Blair  
\$59.95 + \$2.00 ship  
NTSC-01

2000 dissolves trace the revenge of the dead through alien contacts, occultist NASA hacker reincarnation & nuclear weapons testings... into a realm of bee television. "Authentically peculiar...like something from the network vaults of an alternate universe" sez William Gibson. 85 min.



**Cyber Culture**  
..by TLV Productions  
\$15.00 + \$2.00 ship  
NTSC-02

"Definitely a movement of people who want to communicate." Digitally reprocessed documentary on our ilk. *Very into-dense.* Clips of Max Moore (Extropy Institute), PXN (FWI), Charlie Brouvette (Electronic Cafe), Dawn Stoppello (MIDI Dancer), Dave Blackburn (LA VR SIG)... 15 min.



**Alien Dreamtime**  
..by ROSE\*X Media House  
\$20.00 + \$2.00 ship  
NTSC-03

Live event in SF, 26-27feb93, recreate a good trip...must-see for any true head: "aliens", "visuals", "singularity", etc. Terence McKenna speaks in tongues to one-up Robert Tilton, recounting DMT elvenalien lingo, rapping his ethnobotanical theories "Archaic Revival", "Alien Love" & "Time Wave Zero" in a rave, with live video scratching by ROSE\*X, techno loops by Space Time Continuum, didgeridoo by Stephen Kent. 60 min.



**Dissemination Network**  
..by Dissemination Network  
\$10.00 + \$1.00 ship  
MUSE-01

Texas' premier Tek-know multimedia artists. "Guerilla media terrorism from the high-tech underground." No frontman, no guitars: let the media samples & scratches over loops do the talking... "it's about the Information." *Public Enemy meets Front 242*, online.



**Sex Party CD**  
..by Indian Rope Burn  
\$10.00 + \$1.00 ship  
MUSE-02

"Takes a much needed pot shot at techno music... sounds more like a *Lords Of Acid* with *Ministry* guitar" sez *808 Reviews*. "Guitar industrial sound with a slight taste of dance & punk" sez *CyberCulture v1.4*. "At some point the freak show has GOT to end!"



**Flux Oersted Tapes**  
..by Robitron Software  
\$4.00 + \$0.75 ship  
MUSE-03

"Music from the fringes of the electromagnetic field." Subversive, computer augmented songs recorded by *robitron* aka *Flux Oersted*.



**Fringe Ware Review #1**  
..by FringeWare Inc.  
\$5.00 + \$1.00 ship  
ZINE-11

Limited, signed copies of the premier issue. Survival on the margins of cyberculture. Tom Jennings, Bob Black, Don Webb, etc.



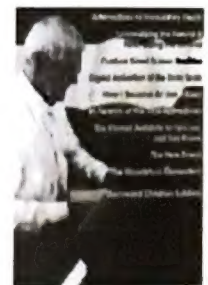
**Unshaved Truths #3**  
..by FringeWare Inc.  
\$5.00 + \$1.00 ship  
ZINE-03

Gonzo fiction & high weirdness featuring: Don Webb, Wendy Wheeler, Peter Meyer, Carlos Rumbaut, Blade X, Jerod Pore, Jon Lebkowsky & more!



**Unshaved Truths #4**  
..by FringeWare Inc.  
\$3.95 + \$1.00 ship  
ZINE-04

Cyborgonic gonzo fiction: "network, elves, horses, dreams, elevator, car-crash, dallas, morphs". Don Webb, Wendy Wheeler, Jon Lebkowsky, Milton Gomelez, C.A. Rumbaut & more.



**Timothy Leary's Greatest Hits**  
..by KnoWare  
\$15.00 + \$1.50 ship  
BOOK-01

Signed, limited edition of monographs includes: Alternatives to Involuntary Death, Criminalizing the Natural & Naturalizing the Criminal, How I Became An Amphibian, The Eternal Antidote to Facism: Just Say Know, etc.

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# mission statement

**Neotribalism in the Global Village...** FringeWare, Inc. (FWI) is a small commercial enterprise dedicated to community development around a fringe marketplace where the edges of diverse alternative cultures intersect. We feel that the market is the core of any community, and sick markets mean sick communities... just look around.

FringeWare acknowledges the essential importance of trade, but our mission is to create a context for E. F. Schumacher's "Economics as if People Mattered."

**What's in the Fringe Market?** We focus on publications, events, and products that we find interesting, fun, and enlightening... we engage in the following business activities:


- \* Publishing printed and electronic periodicals, including *Fringe Ware Review* (ISSN 1069-5656) and *Unshaved Truths* (ISSN 1075-4458)
- \* Operating a retail outlet and a mail order service, selling street tech, software, gizmos, wearable subversive memes, etc. A retail outlet is located in: *Europa Books, 2406 Guadalupe, Austin, Texas, USA*
- \* Hosting an Internet mailing list for information from/about the cultural and technological fringes and providing an automated list server for FWI archives. See page 13 for details...
- \* Organizing events in cooperation with other firms and organizations on the Fringes

We're learning that people can survive quite nicely without huge corporations, huge governments, and huge dogmas pushing their lives. So here's the FringeWare alternative:

**Start your own corporation.** Trade with other like-minded people throughout the Global Village. Encourage innovation and promote entrepreneurship. Promote fair, cooperative business practices. Emphasize products that facilitate creativity, health, and play. Explore consciousness alternatives. Build community through advanced, available technologies, e.g. computer networks. Respect and consider the natural environment by promoting sustainable resource use. Have fun, be weird, and make what it takes to survive.

Welcome to the Fringes of art, technology, and society. From here innovation emerges, and here survival, through cooperation and use of the unexpected, counts. Thankx!

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FRINGEWARE INC.  
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<http://io.com/commercial/fringeware/home.html>



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